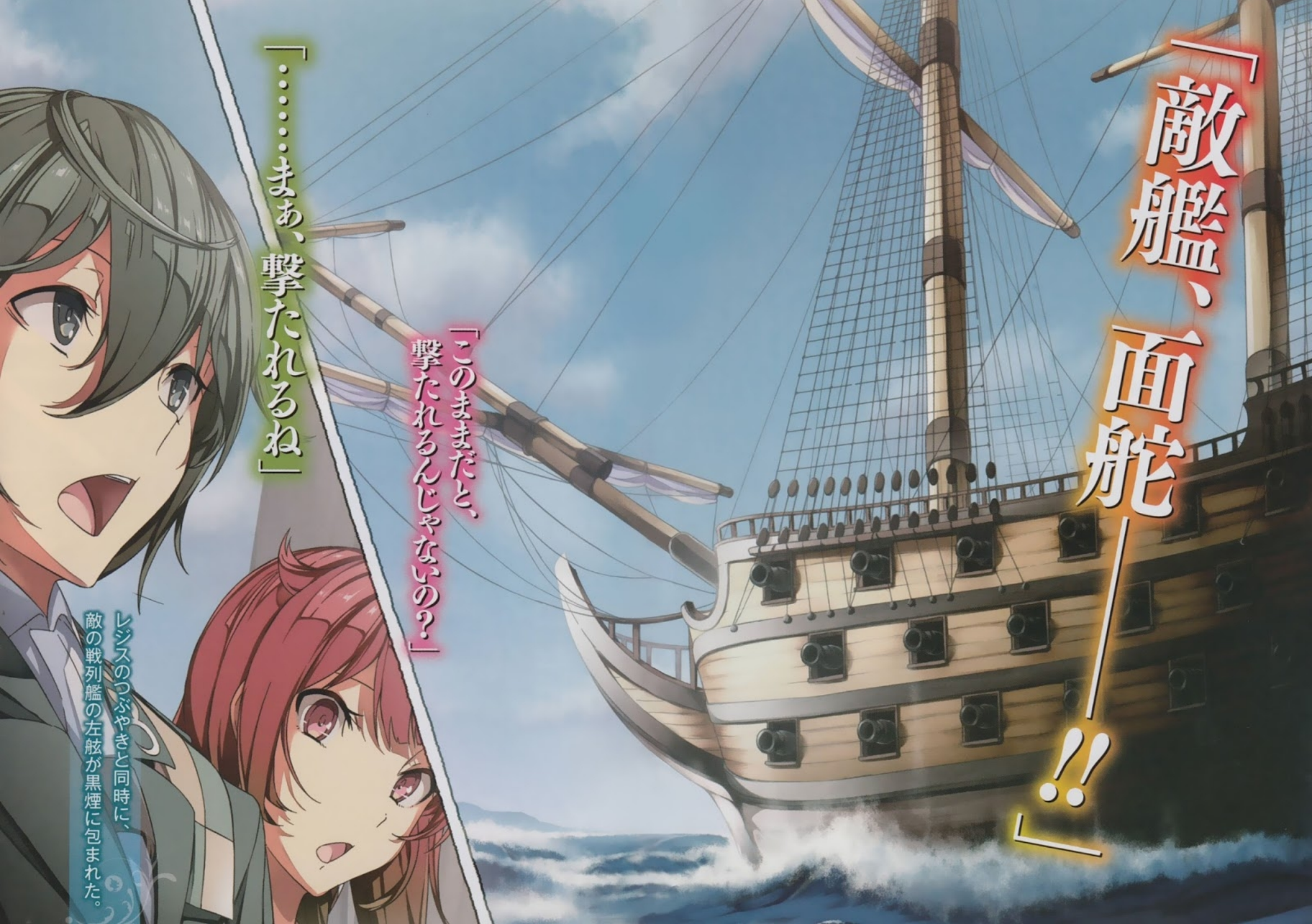
はけんのこうき アルティーナ
ALTINA
the Sword Princess
覇剣の皇姫アルティーナ
VI
Yukiya Murasaki
むらさきゆきや
ill. himesuz
ファミ通文庫

覇剣の皇姫
アルティーナ
VI
ALTINA
the Sword Princess

「……レジス？」
大剣使いの第四皇女
アルティーナ
「僕の!? えっと……僕の仕えている主だよ？」
読書狂の軍師
レジス
「アナタの何？」
港町で暮らす少女
ナリサ

「わかりました。それでは、
私が読んで差し上げますから、
せめて目と体だけでも休ませてください」
「ふふふ、姫様に
見られたら、誤解
されちゃいますかね？」
「え？　なにを？」
彼女の手が伸びてきて、レジスの目元を隠した。
ひんやりとして、やわらかくて、優しい香りがする。
気まぐれな姫付きメイド
クラリス


「敵艦、面舵――!!」
「このままだと、撃たれるんじゃないの？」
「……まぁ、撃たれるね」
レジスのつぶやきと同時に、敵の戦列艦の左舷が黒煙に包まれた。

ALMINA

the Sword Princess

"I trust you," Almina and The bibliophagic boy face difficulties together.

Chapter 1 - On Le Lucé Hill

Empire Year 851, 22nd May—

It was a day later than expected when the First Imperial Army linked up with them on the nearby Le Lucé hill.

A tent was set up on the flat, green ground to conduct a conference. Even though it was daytime, it was quite dim due to the fog.

From time to time, there would be a strong breeze, causing the grass to dance along with the wind. While the altitude was not too low, standing on the mountaintop would still get your hair messy.

The black-haired youth— Regis Auric brushed aside the hair covering his eyes due to the strong wind and looked to the side.

It was the girl who accompanied him on the stroll. Even though it was dim, her beautiful hair looked as if it was shining, which made her conspicuous. Her crimson hair was lifted up by her white and smooth finger.

Her crimson hair brushed against Regis’ face from time to

time due to wind, causing him to feel a little itchy. The girl looked over towards him and they both exchanged a look.

The girl who carried the blood of the Belgarian Royalty was Marie Quatre Argentina de Belgaria. As royalty, she was not normally allowed to walk together with a commoner like Regis regardless of whether he was her strategist or not. If they were alone however, Regis would call her by her nickname Altina, and would also not display a formal attitude towards her. This was because Altina would get angry if Regis displayed such a cold attitude towards her, because it would break Altina's heart…… Though, any person with a brain would not let her feel sad.

Altina opened her mouth.

"Ah, my hair is brushing against you, sorry."

"Ah… it's fine."

"Is that so? Hey, you seem to be in a daze. Could it be that you're sick?"

She stretched her white hand towards Regis' forehead.

Regis immediately retreated two steps back.

“I-I’m fine.”

“Looking at you made me fall in a daze” was something Regis could not bring himself to say. He broke out in sweat in embarrassment.

“That’s good… … Troublesome matters keep coming up recently, so don’t push yourself too hard, alright?”

It was just like what Altina said. Regis had gone through the attack by Varden Duchy, travelled for twenty days straight and even fought a losing battle three days ago.

Luckily, the Beilschmidt Border Regiment did not suffer many losses, and both Altina and Regis were relatively unscathed. However, they were fatigued by the long campaign and battles.

“Compared to us, the soldiers are even more tired… …”

While the others were marching, Regis was sitting on a carriage which was also the temporary office; and he did not participate in any battles directly.

Altina drooped her shoulders.

“Unlike you, the soldiers and I went through training, so the one that I’m most worried about is you.”

“Is that so… … I can’t really deny it because you’re right…”

Altina stuck her tongue out.

“Heh heh~ Since you can’t deny it, does that mean I have some talent in strategizing?”

“That would be even better because it would lighten my workload. I’ll have more time to read that way.”

“I’m just joking.”

“How cruel… … It can’t be helped, guess I should just sacrifice my sleep.”

“Wait a moment, Regis?”

“I’m just fooling around too.”

“Then that’s good… … If you don’t rest properly , you will really get sick!”

“That’s because I already cut my sleep time to the bare minimum already.”

Altina was surprised by Regis’ words.

“You… …”

“Ah, the bare minimum rest is still rest, so I won’t collapse that easily? Probably…”

“Waaa, really! Ah, that’s right, let’s sleep together then! In that case, I will be able to know whether you’ve rested properly!”

Altina had an ‘I am a genius’ look.

However, Regis’ face was getting redder.

As soon as Altina realised what she had said, she blushed.

“Ah, no… … I didn’t mean anything weird?!”

“Y-Yes”.

“I-I’m considered an adult too! I won’t sleep with a male before marriage!”

“That’s true… …”

In Belgaria, one was considered an adult when they reached the age of fifteen.

Altina had her fifteenth birthday on the battlefield yesterday.

Together with the maid, Clarisse, they had a small party.

Jerome, who was known as the Black Knight gave her a bottle

of high-class wine. It was not rare to gift wine for the coming of age.

Altina who drank for the first time, she—

Regis shook his head and cut off his thoughts as the scene was too wonderful for him as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Well, I believe that girls shouldn’t share a room with a male that easily regardless of their age.”

“I-I know that…”

Altina, whose ears were red replied.

They reached the area near the tent which was situated on top of the hill.

“Even when we are in this kind of situation, you’re fighting against Prince Latreille for the throne, so you can’t be too careless.”

“What do you mean by being careless?”

“Hm… … If I knew that, I wouldn’t be phrasing my words like this… … Anyway, you can leave the negotiations to me.”

“Mhm, I’ll leave it to you.”

The tent was guarded by the First Imperial Army’s cavalry on

all sides. Last month, Altina and the others ran into some conflict with them, and inflicted severe casualties on one of the knight corps.

They won't be making trouble for us now, would they? Regis thought as he was a little nervous, while Altina entered with a dignified look.

Her attitude was as if she could take on anything that was thrown at her.

The knights saluted her uniformly without hesitation, flawless and in a textbook manner.

Altina returned a brief salute while Regis followed behind her.

The entrance to the tent was covered by a piece of cloth hanging down and a rock was used to hold it in place at the bottom. Pushing it open, Altina entered the tent as Regis followed closely.

Upon entering, there was a herbal scent. There were six knights at each corner of the tent while First Grade Admin Officer Germain was beside his lord. He had a pained look and there were traces of fatigue on his face. On the other hand, Latreille was sitting on a chair, looking at the map laid out on the table with his head bandaged. That was an injury he received several days ago. However, his face was as calm

as usual and was white whilst his lips were as red as tomatoes. He showed no trace of fatigue at all.

He shifted his sight from the map to them and spoke.

“It’s great to see you’re fine, Argentina.”

“I’m surprised that you’re still so energetic Latreille, I heard that you were injured.”

“That’s right, I fell for the enemy’s tricks. They threw rocks and logs from the cliff above and had their cavalry charged at us.”

“Charging down cliffs and the like, I know you can do it too.”

“That was when I was a child… … I never expected them to penetrate deep into the heart of an army of thirty thousand. Even though we were moving in a valley.”

“Where did the ambush take place?”

Germain, who was at the side replied to Altina.

He pointed to the map.

“Here. Because it’s a path through the mountains, it is very narrow. The enemy came from both sides and retreated after a brief engagement.”

“I see……”

In such conditions, it would be hard to protect the headquarters regardless of how big their army was. These kinds of paths halfway down the mountains usually had many cliffs surrounding it. One would not realise it simply just by looking at the map.

If we’re invading the enemy’s territory, we can only blame ourselves for not preparing against the enemy’s traps and ambushes. However, this is the Empire and the invader is the enemy.— Regis thought.

They needed to have detailed information to understand the terrain to lay an ambush. A lot of time is also required to prepare a large amount of traps. The enemy sure is praiseworthy.

Altina pointed at Latreille’s injuries and said.

“It can’t be helped that you were ambushed, but what about the injury?”

“I was injured by the Mercenary King Gilbert using his special weapon, the trident. I thought I avoided it, but another attack came. He was more skilled than I expected.”

He was still looking towards the map.

Ughhh, Altina softly grumbled.

“So it was the mercenary group, Renard Pendu…”

“Argentina, there appears to be a few problems on your side too.”

“There’s a little… …”

Altina had a bitter expression.

In the battle against Varden Duchy, the enemy from Renard Pendu was a young girl called Franziska. The girl was an expert in using crossbows as she shot the bodyguard Eric and also damaged Altina’s sword, the Grand Tonnerre Quatre.

Latreille picked the pieces up from the map and twiddled with it.

“How’s the Seventh Imperial Army?”

“I believe I had that written in the report clearly. Lieutenant General Barguesonne died along with most of his soldiers.”

The Seventh Imperial Army that had twenty-one thousand soldiers was reduced to ten thousand in the battle a few days ago.

Four thousand killed in action, five thousand injured and two thousand deserters.

Though there might be deserters who were considered dead, and vice versa. In any case, it was not easy to write a detailed battle report since they had lost the battle.

On a side note, among the four thousand in Beilschmidt Border Regiment, they only suffered one hundred casualties from the Black Knights.

Latreille pressed Germain to continue, and Germain spoke.

“I’ll be reporting the situation for the First Imperial Army. Combining the Third Imperial Army and the mercenaries, we have about thirty thousand. While we lost about a thousand in the battle a few days ago, it did not affect us greatly and we still have ample supplies.”

It was natural since only their headquarters was attacked.

Immediately after that, Germain reported about the movements of High Britannia.

“Currently, the High Britannian Army’s southern and northern units are centralizing. Their total strength should be about seventeen thousand.”

Germain placed the pieces onto the map. Red for Belgaria while blue represented the enemy.

Forty-four thousand against seventeen thousand… ...

In terms of numbers, Belgaria had the advantage.

Latreille moved the pieces that were on the map.

“Considering the defeat of the Second and Seventh Imperial Army, the difference in numbers might not necessary mean assured victory… … However, to protect the capital, an all out assault is our only choice. That’s what I think.”

Germain nodded in agreement.

Regis did not deny it either.

While this strategy was direct, it was a good idea.

It was different from the Seventh Imperial Army where infantry was a large part of their forces. They had five thousand cavalry with them now. Even if they were attacked from the sides, they could still reduce the number of casualties. However, Belgaria had already lost thirty thousand soldiers. If the First Imperial Army was taken into account, half of the military force was lost. After this battle ended, it would probably be hard for Belgaria to hold onto the other battlefronts.

High Britannia was not the only enemy Belgaria had to fight against. Latreille was troubled because he understood this.

“Sir Regis, do you have any different ideas?”

Something seemed out of place.

Normally, in these situations, the sharp-witted prince Latreille would gaze at the target’s eyes to see through their thoughts and intentions. This time however, he kept his eyes towards the map, which was very rare.

As to how weird that was, Latreille having use of, and acknowledging Altina was already a strange sight; and then he asked Regis, Altina’s strategist for help. He was playing his cards unorthodoxly..

Is the situation for the Empire so bad he couldn’t be bothered by such details any longer?

Or could it be… ...

—Now isn’t the time to be probing Prince Latreille.

Even if Regis took the bait, it was unclear if he took it out of his interests. In addition, Regis did not prepare anything, so he would face many dangers by investigating it. Furthermore, Latreille might have him silenced if Regis found out his secrets.

It would be best to sort out the information first.

From here to the capital required about half a day of travelling; meanwhile, High Britannia had already set-up their camp. According to the reports, the enemy should still be

camping out in the wilderness. It would be dependent on the weather, but the earliest time for the enemy to be resuming their march would be tomorrow morning, Regis thought.

They could protect themselves against rain and wind if they set up camp, and cook warm meals with simple pots. However, soldiers on the march could only sleep on the ground and eat their food cold. Even the technologically advanced High Britannia could not change that. They most likely won't make their troops suffer unnecessary hardships.

Precisely because of that—

"I believe… … the First Imperial Army should head towards the capital.

Latreille finally turned his head this way.

"Sir Regis, you mean that we shouldn't be doing a frontal assault? Then, what is your plan?"

"That's right… … Although the capital Versaille doesn't have any walls, it still has a few strategically positioned fortresses. Can't we buy some time if we make use of them?"

"Hmm?"

Latreille was in deep thought.

Germain had the same expression too.

Since Altina was the only one who knew that, she had a smug look.

Regis continued:

“If we do a frontal assault, we will have too many casualties. This would threaten the Empire’s survival afterwards. Even if we can win against High Britannia, we must avoid doing so through a frontal assault.”

“That’s right. If we exhaust ourselves too much, it would definitely cause problems in future battles.”

“However… If we can stall for time, we can keep the casualties to a minimum. If it’s sieging, the enemy’s musketeers would be ineffective, and neither can they use their shieldbearers to assault the castle. Even the type 41 Elswick cannons don’t have enough firepower to break through the metal-reinforced walls.”

“That’s true, but if we were to keep defending for a long time, the Empire would fall. If we fall into a deadlock with the High Britannian army, the other nations might not just watch idly by and attack us too.”

The neighbouring countries have most likely begun preparing for war. If they saw Belgaria enter a defensive stance, they would attack like bees swarming nectars..

If Belgaria had friendly relationships with neighbouring countries, they would be coming to help out in this situation. Though it was too late to consider such a thing.

“That’s true. If we factor in the neighbouring countries, we have at most half a year to chase the High Britannian Army out.”

“A defensive battle is not feasible. Sir Regis, do you have a better idea?”

Regis carefully examined his plan in his head once again

From the books he had read, he selected the cases that were most similar to the current situation.

This example should be fine.

Still, Regis was not that confident.

“I believe we should cut their supplies.”

“Oh?”

Latreille was thinking.

While Germain was surprised.

“Then, if we are talking about their supplies, there’s an army of ten thousand guarding Chainboule. Even though there are

reports that half of them are supply units… … Their escorts are still musketeers that are equipped with the latest guns, so how can we win against them so simply? Considering that we have to protect the capital, we can’t commit too many people.”

“Ahh… … It’s true that it would be tough winning against an army of ten thousand. Furthermore, even if we win, there will be no meaning if they send more soldiers in from their home nation.”

“That is so. In the end, High Britannia could still send in more soldier and supplies.

Unlike Germain who still could not understand, Latreille seemed to notice something and had a serious expression.

“Sir Regis, could it be that you’re aiming their supply ships?”

“That is correct… … Since High Britannia’s ships are their only source of replenishing their supplies, if we targeted those then we should be able to turn the tide of the war.”

Latreille shook his head.

“Impossible, while it’s regrettable… … The Empire’s tattered navy could not win against their steamships.”

“That’s true, we will lose if we fight them head on.”

Regis acknowledged the difference in military power between the two countries.

Latreille had an intrigued look as he listened carefully to what Regis was planning.

In panic, Germain exclaimed.

“Why are we discussing about attacking their supply lines if it won’t succeed in the first place?!”

“There are many strategies to defeat an enemy’s navy whose firepower is stronger than our own.”

“What did you say?!”

“What I meant is there’s no other way to protect the Empire except cutting off their supply lines. It would be great if there was a way to defeat the seventeen thousand unit army of High Britannia, and also not suffer great casualties and losses as a result.”

“Facing such a strong opponent… You said… you can win?”

Germain narrowed his brows as he was in utter disbelief.

Latreille asked as to confirm it.

“Can I leave it to you… … The Empire’s fate… …”

“Personally, I would leave it to someone else if there’s someone more suitable than me…”

“That’s impossible! Attacking High Britannia’s steamships, only a Wizard could do that!”

“Ah, I can’t use magic either… …”

“If possible, the strategy would be just like magic. No, it might be more suitable to call it monstrous.”
<TL:Magic and monster sounds sort of similar in Japanese>

“I do not have that kind of talent… … I only know what to do because I read it in books… …”

“Hmm,”

Latreille closed his eyes.

Germain looked at his lord worriedly.

Altina placed both of her hands on the table and leaned forward.

“Is there any reason to hesitate, Latreille! Isn’t it because you don’t want a frontal assault that you called for us?! Compared to the strategy that would not protect the Empire even if we win, isn’t Regis’ suggestion much better?! It will be fine, just leave it to us!”

Latreille stretched out his hand and stopped Altina.

“You’re mistaken, Argentina… … I have my own considerations too. I am only thinking about how many men I can spare to enact Sir Regis’ plan.”

“So you agree with Regis’ proposal?”

“Tell me how many you need.”

Altina turned around and looked at Regis.

“How many?”

“That’s right… … I believe our Border Regiment is enough. However, it would be great if there are local units assisting us.”

“It’s enough with just us!”

Fufu, Altina puffed out her small chest.

Latreille gave a wry smile.

“So you still require local unit’s aid? However, I can’t let Argentina be the messenger.”

“Ah, I’m quick with my legs?”

“Kuku… … Looks like you learnt quite a bit. Be it in battle,

economics or politics… … Looks like Sir Regis is a good teacher.”

“I was taught by him quite thoroughly.”

“True. Then, the Beilschmidt Border Regiment will merge with the remnants of the western units to form the new Fourth Imperial Army. The commander will be Argentina… … Though your rank will have to change. “

“Rank?”

“Admiral Bertram who is stationed at the Western Sea have a rank of Vice-admiral. It would be awkward if your rank is below his… … Together with Fort Volks, you will be promoted to Lieutenant General. Is there anything you are unsatisfied with?”

“I’m fine with it, it’s not like I care about ranks in the first place.”

“It’s just like you… … Germain, the letter of appointment.”

“Yes!”

Germain who was his assistant took out a letter and placed it upon the table.

The letter was already prepared.

It was unknown whether Latreille had the same idea as Regis or that he expected Regis to have thought of such a plan.

Regardless, Regis revised his impression of Latreille— *He's really someone whose depth cannot be measured.*

Altina took the letter of appointment

"Then, I'll be accepting it! Regis would handle the High Britannia's steamships while I'll leave it to you to buy some time!"

"Fu… … Trusting your subordinates and bravely facing the uncertain future is your strength, Argentina. However, I have a group of loyal subordinates too. Coupled with my position as the representative who holds the military in my hand, you're still not fit to lecture me about it. The one to protect the empire will be the First Imperial Army!"

Altina and Latreille smiled at each other.

They are burning up—

Latreille called out once more as if he remembered there was still something left.

"Sir Regis, your promotion to the third grade administrative officer was arranged a few days ago. Have you received the orders yet?"

“No…?”

Regis and Altina shook their heads.

“You have yet to receive? Could it be that it was sent late?”

Fort Volks was located at the border and right beside them was the Varden Duchy. It would take a lot of time for a letter to be sent there as it was too remote.

Latreille nodded.

“Then, I shall issue a new one here.”

Latreille picked up the pen while Germain spread out the letter in front of him.

Because every necessary detail were already written, Latreille only needed to sign it.

Official Letter of Promotion

Sir Regis d'Auric,

You are hereby promoted to Third Grade Admin Officer as of today.

Empire Year 851, 22nd May.

Field Marshal Allen Deux Latreille de Belgaria

From the look of it, Latreille was no longer just a soldier.

According to hearsay, the emperor had issued an order to attack just before they entered a war against High Britannia. It was likely that Latreille was given authority at that time.

Latreille pushed the conversation onward.

“In terms of formality, there isn’t any problem since Argentina, who is your commander, is present. Sir Regis will be granted the rights of a Third Grade Admin Officer as of today.”

“Understood... “

Or so that was what Latreille had said, but Regis’ job description remained the same.

In the first place, Regis held authority and responsibility that did not match any other Fifth Grade Admin Officer.

——*Ahh, the increased salary will allow me to buy more books. That’s great!* Regis thought delightfully.

Together with other documents, Germain passed the letter of appointment to Regis.

“Congratulations on your promotion and receiving the peerage of Chevalier.”

<TL’s note: Chevalier means knight in French.>

“Eh?”

Seeing Regis’ surprised look, Germain smiled a little. Perhaps that was just a little payback for Regis refuting him earlier on.

Upon closer inspection, one would find the word “d” beside Regis’ name in the letter of appointment.
<TL: In French, **de** means **of** (in some cases), and by adding the word *of* next to a family name means it’s nobility.>

Latreille pointed at the document and said.

“Sir Regis, please come to the capital after the war concludes. We need to have the nobilities department grant you the certificate for the title of Chevalier. For the time being, please use that document as your identification.”

“Ah… Nobility… is it…”

What Regis received was not only the letter of appointment, but also the Chevalier certificate.

There were examples of Belgaria giving the title, Chevalier, to soldiers who were Third Grade Officer and above.

While nobility had to be bestowed by the emperor, Chevalier could be granted by nobles in place of the emperor.

In the first place, there was no link between the military and nobility. In addition, there were few cases of a commoner promoted to a Second Grade Officer and above.

Germain tilted his head.

“There’re quite a number of people in the military whose goal is to obtain a peerage… but Sir Regis seems to have puzzled look and doesn’t really look happy.”

“No… … That isn’t it…”

While Regis was prepared to be promoted, he was utterly confused now.

Germain squinted his eyes. Regis felt that the expression Germain made looked just like a snake.

“There are some civilians who are against the nobles and the aristocratic system. Is Sir Regis the type of person who holds such heretical thoughts?”

“Are you referring to the liberalists? I’m not one of them.”

“There’s nothing better than that.”

“However… only the nobles will be happy and not others… For such thoughts to exist means that there are problems in the national system. After all, a country should make its citizens happy. Instead of meting out titles to satisfy their

personal desires, a country should come out with a more efficient way to make its citizens happy. That’s how I feel.”

Germain frowned.

Regis shook his head lightly.

“Of course, be it Prince Latreille or Sir Germain, your actions are for the good of the citizens. Thus, you would not have the thoughts that only the nobles would be happy, right?”

“That’s right… …”

“As such, it would be wrong for me to be overjoyed upon receiving a peerage. Instead, for the inept me to receive such heavy responsibility resulted in me having stomachache.”

“Uh… … What foresight… … As expected of Sir Regis.”

“Thanks for the compliment..”

In the end, Regis did not smile at all upon receiving the peerage.

Latreille broke into a smile and nodded.

“Just giving Sir Regis the title Chevalier is a wasted potential. I pray for the day when you and Sir Germain would be by my sides.”

“Er, you’re overexaggerating.”

Altina grabbed Regis’ arm

“You can’t! Regis is my strategist!”

“That goes the same to you… There will be a day where you will be my right-hand man. Though, the offer which I asked you to be my bride on the founding anniversary still stands.”

“I re-fu-se!”

Pleeh—— Altina stuck her tongue out and made a face.

Perhaps due to Latreille being used to his half-sister’s childish attitude, he did not react to her.

While dragging Regis’ arm, Altina pushed open the entrance and left in big steps.

“Let’s go, Regis! To the west!”

Latreille closed his eyes

His head had been in a buzzing pain.

As the sound of Altina and Regis’ footsteps gradually softened, the surrounding light dimmed.

The entrance was closed by a cloth, hence they could not feel any wind.

Germain ordered the knights to guard outside, hence dismissing them.

As if replacing the knights, someone entered the tent.

“Pardon me”

The voice was filled with tension

Latreille opened his eyes

In his sight was a chubby person standing still.

“Is it the doctor?”

“Can you see me?”

“It’s better than yesterday.”

“How many fingers can you see?”

While the doctor’s right hand pointed out some fingers, Latreille could not count the number of them.

“I can’t… … Though I know it’s the right hand.”

“I-is that so… …”

After saying ‘pardon me’, the doctor began to stretch open Latreille’s eyelid and look at his eyes.

“It seems to have recovered a certain extent.”

“Exactly how much have I recovered?”

“…”

Latreille’s question caused the doctor to hesitate.

“Let me make it clear first,” Latreille spoke.

“Doctor, I dislike spuriousness, especially from a doctor. Do you understand? Tell me honestly about my injury and it will be fine.”

“U-Understood.”

Even so, the doctor found it hard to speak the truth.

After some time passed, Germain brought something that resembled a bowl of water to the doctor. Only then did the doctor speak after drinking it.

“Oh Lord… … Prince Latreille, it would take around half a month for your right eye to recover. However, there’s no hope for your left eye… … The poison has already seeped too

deeply.”

The weapon of the Mercenary King, Gilbert, was laced with venom.

While this action might be despicable to a soldier, Gilbert was a mercenary.

“Is that it?”

“Prince Latreille… … P-Please pull yourself together… … This might be the Lord’s will. This could be a test given to you as to judge whether you can ascend to heaven.”

“Continue.”

“While your right eye will recover… … Your right eye… … will still gradually lose vision completely after some years as it will be doing the job of two eyes, which may be very stressful for it… …”

Latreille sighed.

Germain looked as if he was about to collapse as he used one of his hands to support himself.

“For this to… …”

“Do not panic, Germain.”

“B-But…!!”

“This was the result of the flaws in my strategy and skill. Rather, I’m lucky to be even alive.”

“Ugh… …”

“From today onwards, I will be relying on you even more… … I will be troubling you.”

“No such thing! I have already resolved myself to do anything for Your Highness!”

Germain knelt.

However, Latreille could not see that posture as his vision was like he was inside a thick fog.

“Most likely father would not make a blind person his heir.”

“That’s very likely…”

Latreille’s father—— The current emperor, Liam XV, was obsessed with keeping the bloodline. It was likely that he would also look into the wellbeing of the candidates.

Liam without hesitation accepted the sickly Auguste withdrawing his inheritance rights. In addition, Auguste’s sister who was in long term recuperation had also been excluded regardless of her wishes.

Latreille clenched his fist..

“We can only keep this a secret.”

“Understood.”

“This isn’t just about the inheritance rights… … I would be laughed at by the neighbouring countries and nobles if I lost my vision and became the emperor.”

“For Prince Latreille to stably govern the Empire, we have to keep this hidden.”

“Yes… … Luckily, I only need half a month for my right eye to recover. After that, I can still maintain my vision for a few years?”

The doctor nodded and added, “That is if you attempt to recuperate as much as possible.”

“As much as possible, is it?”

Easier said than done, Latreille thought.

They were currently in a war to protect their nation and Latreille himself was the field marshal.

Furthermore, he was at the forefront of the battlefield.

Strategically speaking, they had to make their move now.

“Even if I can’t see, there shouldn’t be any problems if we defend at the stronghold. My right eye would recover by the time the battle ends… … Also, father is already old. He won’t be able to lead the army personally at such a crucial time… … He has to make a decision soon…”

“That’s right.”

“Once I become the emperor, I will change this country… Change it to a powerful country that will not bow down to others just because they have newer weapons and technology. The Empire will exceed them in military and production technology. I will give our soldiers better equipment and double our agricultural production. Furthermore, I will improve our flood control, punish those nobles who use the taxes for their personal entertainment and won’t host any foolish banquets. I will rectify those old laws and reign in the Church’s authority… … I will make Belgaria a utopia that will never fade even after a millennium.”

“Uhh… … Your Highness!”

Germain widened his eyes.

Latreille’s voice was calm, but one could sense the passion in his words.

“There are many ambitious people in the world whose noble souls were trampled by unreasonable events. That is something we must not allow to stop us.”

“Understood!”

Latreille relaxed his grip and let loose a breath.

“As such… … Argentina’s victory is necessary… …”

“Could the Fourth Imperial Army really win? After all, they are made of defeated soldiers and a border regiment. For them to be the opponent of the High Britannia’s ships that defeated the Empire’s navy… ...”

“If it was you, are you not able to do it, Germain?”

“If it’s your command! However, it would be unlikely that I would win. Even Vice-Admiral Bertram who excels in naval battles lost the Trouin encounter and had to retreat without any results.”

“That strategist said ‘we would lose if we conduct a frontal assault’… … How will he sink those supply ships?”

“I’m born on the west coast, so I understand that the battles that take place in the sea and on land are different. Sir Regis’ strategy is not an exception, so there shouldn’t be too much of an effect.”

“He was born inland.”

Regis’ resume stated that he was born and raised in the capital. The capital was far from the sea and only had lakes.

“Isn’t it a little dangerous to expect so much from him?”

“Surprisingly… … Ever since the war started, we have been separated from Argentina’s regiment. So we aren’t really clear about the details.”

“Hmm…I see…”

“If that’s the case, the outcome in which that person visualises may be different to the outcome that we see.”

“Leaving aside Princess Argentina, Sir Regis doesn’t seem to be brave or courageous at all.”

“While I don’t think he is someone who would lie to protect himself… … If he doesn’t sink those supply ships… … the Fourth Imperial Army’s commander and staff would be held responsible after the war.”

If the Fourth Imperial Army was defeated, this would make the fight for inheritance rights far simpler. Though it would threaten the survival of the empire.

Latreille’s head suddenly began to ache.

He had a terrible look due to the pain.

The doctor quickly advised them to leave.

“Please take a rest now. At least for today since the blurry vision will cause unnecessary burden for your head.”

“Okay… Germain, we are setting off tomorrow morning. Hence, you need to think of a way to flank the enemy and reach the stronghold. It should be possible if we abandon our cannons.”

After finishing his words, Latreille closed his eyes and leaned back against the chair.

23th May——

The Belgarian Army began to move in the rain at midnight.

With the First Imperial Army as the core and the Third and the Seventh Imperial Army with mercenaries added in, they were a force of forty thousand.

They abandoned their cannons and camping equipment to speed up their march. As such, they bypassed the enemy and returned to the defense line near the capital first.

The Beilschmidt Border Regiment—— Also known as the

Fourth Imperial Army with a force of three thousand nine hundred marched towards the west.

When the Fourth Imperial Army set off, the remnants of the Seventh Imperial Army sounded their horn for their long departure.

When they first linked up, the Seventh Imperial Army had a hostile attitude, though it was different now.

This was mostly to thank them for helping in the Battle of Lafressange.

Regis thought that if he was more capable, he could reduce the number of casualties even further. Which was why he could only feel guilt towards the Seventh Imperial Army.

Under Altina’s command, the Fourth Imperial Army sounded the same tune back.

Be brave and more courageous.
Entrust your body to the Lord’s protection.
Entrust your hand to Victory.
What awaits at the end of the battle is glory and honour.
My friend, we shall meet again one day for drinks!

This was the lyric of the tune.

They saw the knight, Coignieres, saluting them. When they first met, he had an arrogant attitude. But now, he was

sincerely saluting them.

The militia, Ducasse, was inside their army. To protect his family living in the east, he wanted to push back the High Britannia Army no matter what.

Please protect the empire—— That was how he implored Altina and Regis.

There were many others who thought the same as him.

A citizen of a defeated country had no human rights. Their wealth or lives might be snatched away on the whims of the victor. That was how scary it was.

Altina who was mounted on a reputable horse smiled at Regis gently.

“The Seventh Imperial Army has changed a lot! Even though they were full of hostility towards us at first.”

“That’s because we both fight for the Empire. So this is normal.”

“Yup, you’re right!”

“Haa…”

“What is it, why did you sigh?”

“That’s because I’m not used to people expecting things from me… … My stomach hurts…”

“It’s alright! You will definitely succeed!”

“”That would be nice… …”

Regis shrugged his shoulders and boarded the white carriage.

Altina pointed at the west and shouted.

“March on, Fourth Imperial Army!”

Tng! Their footsteps resounded through the earth.

Chapter 2 - Narissa From the West Coast

The Fourth Imperial Army set off towards the west coast. Coupled with the harsh weather and long journey, the soldiers were fatigued. Thus they arrived later than expected even though they threw away some equipment during the forced march.

May 29th, dusk. Seventh day after departure.

As they threw away the tent for camping, their headquarters were shabby. Table and chairs were arranged together and large canvases were used to partition a wall. Heavily armoured infantries were also stationed outside as guards.

Regis, who was summoned by Altina entered the private partitioned area after the guards saluted him.

“Pardon my intrusion.”

“Good job, Regis!”

In Belgaria, people with a higher status like royalty were not supposed to sit on the floor, which was why chairs were

brought to the frontline.

Three chairs were prepared, two of them were vacant. Altina sat on the chair further in, while Claire stood behind the canvas partition.

Regis sat on a chair at the side.

“That reminds me… This should be your first time on a march without a tent… … Did you get any good sleep?”

“I’m fine since I used to sleep on the floor as a child. Though, how are the soldiers?”

“Hmm… … Even though it’s a forced march, the soldiers weren’t really discontent as they saw you sleeping with just a blanket.”

“So it’s because we used food to shut their mouth.”

“Ahh, we prepared more than usual as it was essential. Even under harsh conditions, one would not complain if they are full. ‘Men are iron while food is steel. A filled soldier is stronger than anything!’ That’s what’s written in ‘My Military Guidebook’ by the Hero Roman

Altina nodded in agreement. After all, she often said that she could not muster any strength with an empty stomach.

“So that’s it. The other units would be able to do the same if they prepared more rations too.”

“Uh… … That would be difficult as that would increase the numbers in the supply division. That alone would result in even more demand for provisions.”

“But we did it, didn’t we? But how?”

“That’s because the food was kept in cities along the path we are taking. If our supplies are replenished during our expedition, then there isn’t a need to transport them.”

“I see… … Hmm? But isn’t this expedition decided suddenly? Did you hire people to transport them?”

“It isn’t possible with just a few days. If we did that, the regular soldiers would be envious. Moreover, we would be taken advantage of by the merchants… … I bought provisions ahead of time, selling a small part of it from time to time, or send it to the fortress before it spoils.”

“Did the other divisions do this?”

“I never heard of it, but probably not. Normally, expedition within the empire is not… … We purchased them cheaply and sold it for a high price. If we didn’t do it, the unit’s expenditure would increase. That’s especially true for the price of seasoning as it fluctuates greatly.”

“Ehh~… … Although I don’t really understand, it sounds incredible… … For you to do such a thing.”

Altina’s eyes were sparkling.

Regis shrugged.

“Well, the one who concluded the deal isn’t me. It’s difficult for people from Fort Volks located at the border to trade frequently with the Empire’s central. This was all done by Lady Eleanor.”

Eleanor Ailred Winn de Tiraso Laverde was the granddaughter of a duke. Despite her young age, she was the head of her house. In the southern part of Belgaria, she owned large pieces of real estate and farmland. In short, she was a local industry tycoon. Ever since Regis helped her out once, she had been returning the favour to Regis frequently for reasons unknown.

“Hmph… …”

Altina’s voice was getting softer, but Regis did not realise it.

“Small scale trading is the most important to grasp the country’s economy. While there isn’t much profit, one can use it to prepare in time of need and connections can be established. I believe this would be useful in the future.”

“What’s your relation with Eleanor?”

It was a very cold voice.

Regis then remembered something.

That reminds me, Altina was in a bad mood for a period of time after Eleanor kissed me on my face as a prank.

Clarisse who was standing some distance away sighed.

“Really, Sir Regis.”

“Erm… … Could it be that you are still bothered by that incident? Even though it was a prank?”

At that moment where the atmosphere was that of a cheating

husband being caught——

“I’m coming in.”

A deep voice could be heard.

It was Jerome who came in.

While he was carrying a sword with him, he was not wearing any armour.

Altina maintained her sitting posture and put her hands on her waist.

“You sure came late.”

“Hmph.”

Jerome just sat on the chair without explaining anything.

While Clarisse prepared warm red tea.

Regis sipped some red tea and complimented it.

“This is delicious, Clarisse. It’s already amazing that you

managed to boil the water without using any stove, and the taste remains the same as usual.”

“It’s my honour that this suits your taste.”

Clarisse lowered her head deeply as she spoke. She would keep quiet if she was around people she did not acknowledge.

If there were only Altina and Regis, she would not only smile, but also crack a joke or tease Regis. However, Jerome was present, which was why she seemed to have turn into someone whose emotions could not be seen.

Altina lifted the teacup and smiled at Clarisse.

“Thanks for all this time, Clarisse.”

“Not at all… …”

She returned to the other side of the canvas and stood still as if she was a decoration.

Jerome opened the map on the table and seemed to be searching for something. He was not interested in tea as he drank the wine he brought.

“Oi, Regis, will it be fine to go to le Troyeti fort tomorrow?”

Le Troyeti was a fortress where the Second Imperial Army which was defeated at Chaineboule and nearby troops convened. If they passed down the order, they would be able to muster a large force of over ten thousand. Furthermore, it only required half a day journey to Chaineboule which the High Britannia Army occupied.

Regis who was holding the tea with one hand nodded.

“Yes. Considering our future course, it would be best to obtain help. However, it would be best to link up with the navy as soon as possible.”

Jerome nodded.

“So you can’t wait to go to the sea.”

“Even so, we would eventually require the help of those stationed in Le Troyeti fort. It would be difficult for them to coordinate our movements if we send them an urgent order only after reaching the place right?”

“You shall decide what we should be doing. The princess

there couldn’t make the call anyway.”

Jerome interrupted.

Altina pouted.

“Well, that’s true… … Hmm.”

Regis thought for awhile.

“I think it would be more efficient if we split up. I will link up with the navy to prepare for the upcoming battle.”

“Eh?! What about me?!”

Altina stood up from the chair.

“You will be going to the Second Imperial Army. I will leave protecting the princess to you, Sir Jerome.”

“Hmph, so it’s like this.”

Jerome nodded.

Other than guarding her, Jerome’s large build would make it

easier to convince the Second Imperial army to follow the command of Altina who was just a young girl.

Though they would likely to obey her due to her being a royal, military rank and Latreille’s order.

Altina who was still standing widen her eyes.

“It would be dangerous for Regis to go alone!”

“We are racing against time here. It’s likely that the battle already began near the capital. While I believe that General Latreille’s defence would not be overcome that easily, the casualties would increase as the time drags on. It would be pointless to attack their supply ships if we have too many losses.”

“Even if that’s the case… …”

“What would we do if they engaged the enemy at sea if I’m late in linking up with them? Without them, it would be difficult to carry out this mission… … Furthermore, should the enemy managed to transport the supplies, it would only increase the chance of the capital falling.”

“I understand… … but is it really fine for you to be alone?”

“If I bring along your signed orders, I think they will believe me.”

“I’m not talking about this! You do know that we are quite close the enemy? Even the harbour the fleet is stationed in is close to Chaineboule!”

If the information was accurate, the Empire’s fleet was located in a fishing village which was quite near Chainboule. While it was not supposed to be used as a port for the military, they could not help it due to the need for food and fresh water supplies. While it would take half a day if they walked along the coast, it would only take two hours using steam ships.

Hmph, Jerome snorted and pointed at the map.

“What then, princess? Refute the strategist’s idea?”

“T-That… … I know that Regis isn’t wrong… … but aren’t you worried, Jerome?”

“People have to die one day. Whether they die like a dog in the wilderness or die trying to protect the country… … For me, I live by the sword, die by the sword. For the strategist, maybe it isn’t that bad dying in a battle plan he devised himself?”

Jerome’s words caused Altina to lower her head.

After thinking for awhile, she spoke as if confirming something.

“That… is possible. It seems that way… … Even I have my own goals… … If it’s for that, I’d rather die than live without any purpose.”

She said so with a serious expression.

For a sword user, her words carried such weight.

Regis found it hard to speak.

“Well… … I don’t want to die.”

This caused the other two fell into silence.

I won’t be able to read books if I die—— He swallowed back those words.

“Er… … High Britannia’s ‘Queen’s Navy’ goal was to transport supplies. So it’s unlikely they would attack a fishing village

that holds no strategic purpose.”

“If Regis feels that it’s alright… …”

Altina sat back on the chair while still having a worried look.

Jerome continued looking at the map.

“Have you decided the unit composition yet?”

“I just need a hundred knights for escort, and also carriages to transport provisions. I will just sit on the carriage.”

Altina tilted her head.

“That white carriage?”

“I think it’s better for Clarisse to use it, since she has to follow you.”

“Is that so… …”

Altina sneaked a look at Clarisse.

However, right now she would not say anything at all and will stand as still as a doll.

Jerome stood up from the chair.

“Alright, one hundred men is it? I will go pick a hundred men who won’t bring me shame even if they go out to sea.”

“Please choose calm and reasonable people… …?”

“Ha! My subordinates are all gentlemen! If you can get them to listen!”

“At least choose those who would not draw their sword without orders.”

“Kukuku… …”

Jerome went out with an evil grin.

Altina shrugged her shoulders.

“He’s a little too hasty. The meeting isn’t over yet.”

“Is there something else?

“Not at all… … Will it really be fine, Regis?”

“I don’t want to die yet, so I will avoid doing dangerous things. Have some faith in me.”

Altina stared at him while biting her lips. She looked just like a child who got separated from her parents.

Even though she turned fifteen, an adult, a few days ago, she still showed her childish side from time to time.

“I will go and find you immediately after I greet the commander of Le Troyeti fort.”

“Ahh, even though I said that we are splitting up, it would probably only take a day.”

“Uuh… … At least ride a horse so that you can escape when you’re in danger. I have taught you before.”

“You’re worrying too much.”

Contrary to her distrust, her worrying this much shows how much she cares about me. Regis’ heart felt warm thinking that way.

“Even if you say so, you can’t even use a sword nor ride a horse. It’s definitely dangerous to split up right in front of the enemy… … Hey, Clarisse, aren’t you worried too?”

“That’s right… … I’m worried about it too.”

“It’s fine, the enemy won’t come.” Regis said so and left the headquarters while smiling.

“Whenever Regis took actions alone… …”

“Hmm?”

“…He always got involved with girls.”

Clarisse simply stated.

Ahh, that’s right!—— Altina had a scary expression with her eyes widened.

How weird. Even though it felt warm in my heart just now, my back feels so chilly. Regis thought.

***

The next day, May 30th—

After splitting from the Beilschmidt Border Regiment, Regis' group visited a fishing village named Ugovi which smelled like seaweed everywhere.

I see, so this is the smell of the sea. Even though I read it before, this is my first time seeing the sea myself.

The colour blue stretched beyond the horizon.

The wind was damp.

One hundred knights were led by Abidal Evra, a Second Grade Combat Officer. However, Regis was the captain of this detachment even though Abidal was older and had a higher rank. Even so, no one voiced out any dissents as they all had accepted Regis as their strategist.

The men chosen by Jerome excelled in horsemanship, which was why they reached their destination two hours earlier.

The time now was almost noon.

This was a small fishing village that had thirty to forty families.

However, the smoke coming from their chimney exceeded their numbers. That was probably due to them preparing lunch for the soldiers.

Several fishing vessels were docked at the bow-shaped beach.

While the military ships were further out on the ocean.

Vessels of various sizes numbered about thirty.

Regis breathed a sigh of relief.

——*That’s great, looks like I made it in time.*

Surrounding the fishing village were fences that was as tall as a man. Rather than for military purposes, it was more to protect against wild animals.

Noticing the cavalry unit, which was Regis’ unit, approaching, a lot of sailors gathered inside the fence.

It was a good thing that Regis dispatched a messenger to alert them, which was why they did not need to waste too much effort to enter the village.

Regis was brought to the largest house in the village while being surrounded by the knights.

It was likely that this house which was turned into the temporary navy headquarter belonged to the village chief. There were sailors guarding it at the entrance and corridor. Even so, the house was not that large, so only Abidal Evra accompanied Regis in while the others stood outside.

Men belonging to the navy saluted by clamping their armpits and placing their right fist on their left chest.

However, their sight was not on Regis, but to Abidal Evra beside him.

It was because Abidal Evra’s appearance gave people the impression of an excellent knight. Wide shoulders, thick chest, bearded and equipped with top quality armour.

On the other hand, Regis was not wearing any armour or sword, neither did he look like someone of valour.

As it would be troublesome to explain, Abidal Evra returned their salute and whispered to Regis afterwards.

“Sir strategist, please equip your armour and sword, at least for occasions like this?”

“Well… … Even if I do so, I won’t look like the captain.”

“Then how about wearing medals? After all, you definitely earned a commendation for capturing Fort Volks and rescuing the Seventh Imperial Army.”

“The credits belong to the princess, and the soldiers did the actual fighting… … If I was to put on medals, people would think that I am ambitious. That isn’t a laughing matter.”

“At least stick your chest out while walking.”

“Ah, okay.”

Regis frantically tried to straighten his posture as he walked.

Commander’s room——

Even so, it was more like the living room of the village chief.

Sailors whose uniforms differed from the land based knights stood in front of the sofa.

There were a total of six men.

Standing in the middle, a bearded man who looked around the age of fifty saluted without much strength behind it.

“I’m the fleet admiral of the western fleet, vice-admiral of Belgaria, Christophe Denis de Bertram…Welcome, young strategist of the land forces.”

“Glad to meet you, I’m Regis Auric, Third Grade Admin Officer of the Fourth Imperial Army.”

Abidal Evra beside him seemed to have something to add on.

Probably it was because Regis was given a peerage, which was why his name should be Regis d’Auric.

However, it was too late to point that out.

So he pretended not to notice it.

On the other side, every one of them were young officers, except for Bertram. Furthermore, one of them who had the aura of an admiral saluted and introduced himself.

In the navy, the order was given by the fleet admiral, which

would be passed down to the sailors via the captains of the ships. This was different from inland battle where soldiers relied on their individual strength as the crucial point in sea battle was determined by the capability of the admiral and the captains.

Regis sat on the sofa after being offered.

Behind him was Abidal Evra standing by as his guard.

Bertram and the rest also sat down. *That reminds me, why didn't they mistake Abidal as me?* Regis thought.

"That… pardon me, but did we meet before?"

"Ah, I happened to chance upon you conversing with Her Highness Argentina on the Founding Anniversary while I was taking a break."

"I see. My apologies for not greeting you at that time."

"No… … Rather, I remain neutral with regards to the inheritance struggle. Regardless of who the next emperor is, my fleet would only sail for the Empire."

"Her Highness would be looking forward to it."

Bertram nodded.

However, his expression turned gloomy.

“Even though I swore that, we are in a crisis right now… … High Britannia’s warships are too strong.”

“I understand… …”

Bertram was a vice-admiral, a duke and was already approaching fifty. His rank, status and even age far exceeded Regis. However, Regis never expected Bertram to show such weakness to him.

He did not expect the enemy fleet to be this strong.

Bertram smiled weakly and spoke.

“Looks like the land forces had a good laugh at us…”

“There is no such thing… …”

“Let’s begin with the numbers on both sides as of now.”

“Yes.”

“High Britannia’s steam battleship, princess class, with forty-seven guns can travel about 15 knots. On the other hand, our large sail warship, the Athena class with eighty guns, can just barely reach that speed when traveling at full sail.”

“We are lucky that they are just focused on guarding the supply ships. If they were to engage proactively in sea battle, we won’t be able to escape.”

“That is so. The enemy are equipped with Elswick guns, their range are about 45Ar (3216m).”

“So it’s a type 41.”

“Yes.”

“In fact, our Athena class warships are using the super-large cannon that could only shoot up to 38Ar (2715m). Furthermore, the enemy is several times faster than us in loading and firing their guns.”

“As expected of you, my good sir, to investigate this so thoroughly.”

“This was all written in the books.”

Bertram nodded.

“There are still three princess class docked at the harbour. While we have nine Athena class ships… … In addition, there will be a Poseidon class equipped with hundred and twenty guns coming in as scheduled tomorrow.”

“Did you call it from the southern sea?”

“I summoned it to the north in case High Brittania attacks. It’s a very slow ship though.”

“Can the vastly inferior Poseidon class win against the enemy princess class?”

“It would probably be difficult. Firstly, the enemy is outside our range while we are in theirs, so they will grind away at us. The Poseidon class warships have thick armour, but it has two weakness.”

“Is it the sail and the guns?”

“Yes. There are holes in the sail, hence making it harder for it to move. Even turning the ship would be difficult.

Furthermore, the guns are arranged close to one another on both sides. If the enemy's shell hit the cannon window, the worst scenario would be our ammunition catching fire."

"Hm… … If the speed is faster than the enemy, we can still retreat even if we lose out in terms of firepower..."

"It's possible with Ouranos class that's equipped with eighteen guns. While we have twenty of them, their firepower are not up to task. It would be over if they took one or two hit at close distance. Unlike the durable Athena class, the small Ouranos class can be set ablaze easily. A single shot is enough to disable them."

"It will be bad if they can't escape… …"

Bertram had a grim expression.

"We attempted to attack the enemy's supply ships."

"You're referring to the Trouin's sea battle?"

"We found their supply route and the wind is in our favour, It should have been an easy victory… … However, the enemy's attacks were too fierce and we lost four Athena class instead."

“And the result?”

“Even though we hit them a few times, none of the princess class were sunk. Though one supply ship sunk and another could no longer sail… … In the end, it took all of our effort just to retreat, so I’m not too sure about the situation later on.”

“So it’s a complete defeat… …”

“So this is what had happened. We have gathered all the ships that can attack in the west coast here. Those ships that can’t are likely under maintenance.”

“We can’t always be at a disadvantage…”

Repairing a warship could take up to a year and one could not simply prepare a substitute ship for it.

“High Britannia should have more princess class and supply ships in reserve. We need to use the ships here to engage them.”

‘Understood… …”

Bertram looked over with sharp eyes.

and spoke with a serious tone.

“This is our current situation.”

“I’m grateful for your explanation.”

“It’s obvious that our firepower is inferior to them. However, we can’t lose any more ships here. Even so, we can still do something. Is that what you’re thinking?”

“That’s right.”

Regis nodded.

This caused a commotion between the officers.

Bertram’s eyes became sharper.

“Even if you have many achievements inland… … It’s different on the sea.”

“I understand that… … Even though I’m not that confident… … the Empire will lose this war if we fail to obtain victory here.

The officers looked at one another.

They had yet to understand the current situation inland.

Regis told them plainly.

“High Britannia Army defeated the Second and Seventh Imperial Army. The First Imperial Army is having a hard time defending the capital.”

“Does Marshal Latreille think that we can win…?”

“It would be great if he could win… … However, it would be difficult since the difference in our equipment is too great.”

“For it to be like this… …”

“If the enemy receive their supplies, it would turn into a stalemate… … If that happens, the neighbouring countries would turn against us. At that time, the capital will be surrounded by tens of thousands of enemies.”

The naval officers who heard this all turned pale.

Bertram entered into deep thought.

Regis stood up from the sofa.

“Marshal Latreille has an order for you in his capacity as the commander in chief. The unit here has to obey the Fourth Imperial Army’s commander, Princess Argentina. As the princess’ strategist, I should have some authority as well… … As this battle concern our lives… I believe it would be difficult to obtain your trust since we just met. So I will excuse myself first and give everyone some time to discuss the current situation.”

“What if we don’t accept you?”

“To tell the truth… what we still need to do remain unchanged. I have no intention of giving an order to my superior. At most I will explain a strategy that would be acceptable to you… … Though it might be a little troublesome if my words fail to reach you.”

“Hu… … Even though you say you’re not confident, but looks like you do not doubt your strategy at all.”

“No… I really do not have much confident. It’s just that I happened to read a similar situation in a book before.”

Bertram and the rest showed an amazed expression.

Regret turned towards them to excuse himself.

“I wish to have a look at Chainboule’s harbour. I will be back before dinner.”

“What? Do you need of a ship?”

“There’s no need for it, since I have yet to receive your permission, I won’t be using the naval ships. Since I’m just scouting out the enemy, a small ship is enough. I will just negotiate and borrow a fishing boat from the villagers.”

“… You are a strange man…”

“I’m often told that.”

After giving a wry smile, Regis left the room.

***

Passing through the gaps between the neatly lined houses, Regis finally reached the dock.

The sea breeze and the waves gave the place a varied feel about it The rest went to take a break and Regis only brought along Abidal Evra and five other knights along with him. Rather than a dock, it was more like fishing boats left at the beach and tied down with ropes that could withstand the wear and tear of the waves.

There was no one here as the fishermen only went out to sea in the morning.

Abidal Evra tilted his head.

“Why did they bother to pull their boat on to the beach?”

“… They probably tied it down at that place so the boat won’t be stranded in the morning.”

“Why is that so?”

On a side note, most of the Beilschmidt Border Regiment did not have any knowledge regarding the sea.

“Erm, that’s because there is something called tides in the sea——”

The reason behind the tides is due to the combined effects of

gravitational forces exerted by the Moon and Sun.”

“Gravitational forces?”

“That’s right, this was explained in Scholar Pierre-Simon ‘Celestial Mechanics’. That book noted down the movement of the celestial bodies.”

Abidal Evra could not understand Regis’ words at all and his eyes darted around.

Suddenly, he pointed at a certain direction.

“Ah, Sir strategist, there’s someone on that boat!”

“Eh?”

Regis didn’t finish explaining yet… Cutting short his words, Regis headed towards the boat.

There was a youth with brick-coloured hair tidying his fishing net on a boat. He looked around seventeen or eighteen.

While he looked slender, it was clear that he had muscles.

In Belgaria, one was considered an adult upon reaching fifteen, so he was a professional fisherman.

Regis raised one of his hands.

“Hey there, good evening, can I take some of your time?”

“Waa?!”

The fisherman instantly had a vigilant posture. Regis scratched his head upon seeing that.

“Er, it seems I surprised you.”

“Y-You’re a soldier…?”

“Is this your boat?”

“I own a share of it… Is anything wrong?”

From the looks of it, this was shared between him and his partners.

It was not rare at all as fishing required many people to do so. Furthermore, they had to pay the maintenance cost after

buying a boat. The boat might be shared by family members too.

Regis also understood another thing.

——*It seems that the military isn't welcomed here.*

It seems that the villagers feared the soldiers based on this youth's attitude.

Well, it's even rarer to see the locals mingling with the soldiers who were staying here temporarily—— Regis sighed in his heart.

Soldiers always use words like 'we're protecting you!' or 'it's an emergency!', act overbearing and loved to order others around.

The largest house in the village was likely turned into a headquarters by force.

To the villagers' eyes, this was no different than bandits, so the military were unwanted guests.

That might be so, but Regis couldn't take a high handed approach. Though he deemed it necessary to investigate the situation before linking up with Altina.

“Actually, I wanted to have a look at Chainboule’s harbour. Can you introduce me someone who knows that area well to guide us?”

Regis wanted to borrow the boat from the youth initially. However, it would be tough based on his attitude, which was why Regis asked the youth to introduce someone to him.

Despite his unwilling look, he did not decline.

That was because of Regis’ negotiating ability—— Not. It was likely due to Abidal Evra and the guards’ presence that he did not decline.

“I-If that’s the case…It would be better to ask the village chief… … He knows these things better than me.”

“Where can I find the village chief then?”

“He’s in the house the soldiers call headquarters.”

“I see.”

The village chief was likely in a room different from the Commander’s room.

Then he should head back.

Just when Regis was about to leave.

Tap tap tap tap! Loud footsteps approaching him could be heard.

Looking towards the source, someone was running towards him on the stone embankment.

Wearing a cloth dress and her black hair swaying under the setting sun.

“Wait——! What are you doing with my boat?!”

It was a sharp voice

The one who was running towards him was a girl.

She looked around fifteen, the same age as Altina.

With black hair and eyes, she gave a strong impression on others.

After jumping down from the embankment, she ran straight

here through the sand.

She stopped right in front of Regis, leaving behind a dust cloud of sand.

“That’s my boat okay?!”

“Ahh, so it’s yours and his ship. It’s alright, I didn’t do anything other than having a talk with him.”

Haa~ The girl sighed in relief.

“That scared me… … I thought you were going to take it away.”

“Haha… … We won’t take away fishing boats no matter how dire the situation the Empire is in.”

“Hmph, I’m sorry for having a shabby boat! I’ll say this first, but boats can’t be just judged by its appearance!”

The girl’s expression was just like cat’s eyes, changing every once in awhile. Her lips pursed up while her tone seemed to be a little agitated.

Regis got a little exhausted.

“No, that’s not it. The fishing boats are the source of income for the fishermen and their families, isn’t it? I won’t do something that’s so overbearing.”

“Didn’t a few families had their boats taken away?!”

“That’s a loan… … I think. Though I’m not too sure about the details.

The youth on the boat could not bear it anymore and spoke to the girl.

“Narissa, don’t get involved with the soldiers. We were just talking, so just stay aside first.”

“What are you saying, Fippo? I rushed here because I don’t feel at ease with you handling it. So? What were you talking about?”

“It’s none of your business.”

While his tone was coarse, Fippo’s voice was getting softer as his presence was overwhelmed by her.

Regis repeated his words once more.

“That’s because I wanted to have a look at Chainboule’s harbour, so I asked him to help me introduce a guide.”

“So you need a boat?”

“That’s right, I wanted to know the situation at the occupied harbour. Though information regarding the sea here is fine too. I would like to have the finest details if possible. Though I prefer an experienced boatman… …”

“Go and find the village chief then.” Fippo muttered.

The girl named Narissa shook her head.

“You can’t! Just recently, the village chief said that his waist hurts, so he can’t go out to sea! Rather, it’s fine as long as they know how to operate the boat?!”

“Yes… Well… I believe that the High Britannia Army would not mobilise just because of a fishing boat. As time is precious, someone who can operate the boat will be good enough. Though I would be grateful if the speed is fast.”

“I know someone who’s skilled in it.”

Fippo who was keeping the fishing net stood up after hearing Narissa’s words.

“Hey, Narissa! Stop fooling around! I already told you to stop getting involved with the military!”

“Keep quiet, Fippo!”

“Ku… … I… don’t care anymore!”

Regis asked.

“Could it be that the fastest boat refers to yours?”

“That’s right! The fastest boat in this village is ours! We won’t even lose out to Zeilow’s boats!

“Zeilow…?”

“It’s the guy staying in the large house over there. He kept buying new boats just because he’s rich. However, his seamanship isn’t that outstanding which is why his boats are slow.”

“I-I see…”

It seemed that there were various things that happened in this fishing village.

Regis looked at their boat once more.

After comparing it to the boats in this area, it seemed what she said was true.

Narissa puffed her chest out and said:

“Even though Fippo isn’t good at reading the wind, he’s good at the nets and the sail. And if I’m to helm the boat, we won’t lose to anyone under any sort of wind condition!”

“Hmm… … Do you know the sea here well?”

“Definitely! I know it better than the fishes!”

After saying so, she puffed her chest out once more.

Even though it was hidden under the thin cloth dress, her chest had been shaking along with her movement since the start.

I thought she was the same age as Altina.… … but it looks like the part here seems more matured than her.

Fippo sighed once more.

“In the end, it will just be free labour, Narissa.”

“Ah?! That’s right, they are soldiers! Ahh, please forget what I just said!”

There were no rules stating that soldiers asking help from civilians have to pay them remuneration. Even though the remuneration was not much, but most would not pay them at all.

“There will be remuneration. Not just borrowing the boat, I also want to obtain some information regarding the sea here, which would take up a considerable time of yours. If you’re willing to help, I will pay you eight Sols a day.”

“Eight silver coins?!”

Narissa widened her eyes.

Fippo was so surprised that his mouth could not close.

That was the salary of a regular soldier for a week. It was much more than what they could earn through fishing.

Even so, in order to win against High Britannia, her knowledge was necessary. Comparing the two things,

spending some money was worth the while.

“I’ll do it! I’ll definitely do it! I will still do it even if I’m alone in this!”

“I’ll do it too if there’s remuneration.”

“That’s a great help. I’m Regis Auric. Nice to meet you.”

“It’s fine to call me Narissa. Nice to meet you, Gis!”

“Gis…?”

Regis tilted his head.

Fippo shrugged his shoulders.

“Narissa always shorten people’s name in her own accord. I’m Philips Ran Aquanord.”

“Erm… … Aren’t you husband and wife?”

“Buahaha! You’re wrong, I’m only fourteen! Fippo and I are childhood friends, as our two families are so close that we even fish together. Our relation is only to that extent.”

Our relation are only to that extent—— Hearing this, Fippo sighed.

Well, there will always be obstacles in life.

“I see, so you two are childhood friends.”

“Though I really want to have my own boat, my father is too stubborn. He kept saying something like ‘it’s fine as long as Fippo is helping out to fish’.”

“That’s because you’re a girl. Normally, you should be staying at home doing chores?”

“But I’m good in helming the boat!”

“Ugh… … I-I will get the hang of it in no time!”

Fippo turned and continued gathering his nets.

Under the setting sun, Fippo’s muscles stood out even more, and were in no way inferior to the knights despite his slender built.

This was the proof that he did not slack off his work.

Fippo spoke while tidying up the net.

“Hey, Narissa, stop standing there idly. It’s better to go Chainboule’s harbour as light as we can, so help me unload all these items from the boat.”

“I get it! Gis, we’ll be able to set off soon, so when do you want to go?”

“As soon as possible please.”

Narissa blinked her eyes.

“Oui! Come aboard now! Ah, it would be faster when there’re less people though?”

“It’s fine with just me.”

Abidal Evra who was standing silently frantically spoke.

“You can’t! At least allow me to accompany you!”

“Let’s do that then.”

Narissa and Fippo unloaded their nets, stove and fishing equipment.

Abidal Evra was astonished by how they simply threw the items onto the beach.

“Aren’t you afraid that someone will steal them?”

“Ha…? Buahahaha! Which idiot would do that? If they use stolen equipment to fish, they would invoke the wrath of the Sea God and have their ship wreck!”

Abidal Evra and Regis looked at each other without understanding anything.

Beilschmidt Border Regiment believed in the northern faith, so she was likely to be talking about the local god.

Even though Belgaria only recognize one national religion and prohibited idol-worshipping, there were many areas that still have their own customs.

Narissa unfastened the ropes while Fippo pushed the ship.

As Abidal Evra was helping Fippo pushing the boat into the

sea, the other knights also joined in.

Regis thought of helping, but he realised he would only cause more trouble instead.

Narissa shouted when the boat was floating in the sea.

“Come aboard!”

“What… Wait… …”

Jumping from the sandy beach to the boat floating on the water was harder than riding a horse. Narissa stretched her hand out to the hesitant Regis.

“You’re going to be left behind, Gis!”

“A, ahh!”

Regis managed to grab onto her hand.

Fippo and Abidal Evra also helped along with the other knights, and Regis finally boarded the boat.

It was more accurate to say he was thrown onto the boat

though.

The boat soon drifted into the sea.

Regis was moved by the scene.

“We’re floating… … and the waves too… … Incredible!”

“Hmm? Is this your first time coming to the sea?”

“Yeah, though I read about it countless times before.”

“You can’t just rely on reading. There are many things in this world that you won’t understand unless you experienced it yourself!”

“Haha… … You’re right.”

Regis and Abidal Evra was sitting at the area where the net and fishes used to be.

Even though it was a small boat, it felt rather large due to the simple design. A mast was erected at the front of the boat and the squarish sails were unfurled.

The sails were moving in accord to the wind.

It was the same with Narissa’s dress, swaying around.

Narissa pressed down her dress.

“Ughh~~ I forgot to change my clothes. I never thought that I would be sailing after noon… … What an embarrassment… …”

“Focus on helming, Narissa. No one would look at it.”

“I’ll hit you, Fippo?!”

Regis looked away subconsciously.

It was not the time to look at the dress of someone younger than him, instead, he should focus on the situation in the sea.

“Er… … Is there any shallow area that is near Chainboule’s bay?”

“If it’s to the degree of the fishing net reaching the bottom, there’s quite a few?”

“I wish to have a look at it, do you know are those areas?”

Regis took out a sea chart from his bag.

The sea chart was a little old, but the sea terrain shouldn’t change much.

Chainboule’s harbour was deep within a cove.

“I wish to know more about the area here.”

Narissa left the helming of the boat to Fippo and came over.

“Erm… … Is this the harbour?”

“That’s right. Chainboule is over here while Ugovi is here… …”

Regis pointed at the chart.

Narissa nodded.

Even though she said that she knew this area better than the fishes, it felt more like she knew more about the fishes instead.

It was necessary to do a thorough investigation using measuring equipment to measure the depth and the flow of the sea.

In addition, finding a suitable area for the battlefield would be rewarding.

***

At a distance away from Chainboule’s harbour, various things were investigated that the sun had already set beyond the horizon when they returned.

Looking at the east, the earth was dyed red by the setting sun.

After making sure the boat was secured, Narissa began to complain.

“Haa~ I’m so hungry… My hands hurts… … my muscles are sore too… …”

“What are you grumbling about… … This is a job you accepted.”

“You’re not tired, Fippo? I’ll leave the keeping of those things to you. I’ll be going back for dinner.”

“Stop joking around, you!”

“That’s because the village chief is organising a feast today. Nothing would be left for us if we don’t go soon.”

“Move faster if you really want to eat.”

The two loaded the equipment that was left on the beach onto the boat while bickering.

That’s what it means by the more you bicker, the better your relationship...

What a close pair of childhood friends.

Regis was still a little seasick and looked sluggish. It would be worse if he had eaten more during breakfast.

On the other hand, Abidal Evra was listening to the reports of the knights that were left behind.

Narissa came over and spoke.

“Hey, Gis.

“Yah… That’s right.”

Regis nodded while suppressing his seasickness.

He took eight sol from his bag and handed it over to her.

Normally, Regis would need to claim it from the budget, but they were in a middle of a war and Regis knew the Fourth Imperial Army’s finance very well, so it was fine.

After counting the money, Narissa carefully kept it into her cloth bag.

“Ehehe, thanks!”

“Ah… … I should be saying that, you’re a great help.”

“Do you want to go to the feast together? Do you still have anything to ask that I do not know? You could ask the people there as there should be some who would know.”

“May I know the reason for the feast?”

“The village chief would bring out alcohols and food to host a feast once a month, calling it a return of gratitude of sorts .”

“Ahh, a mutual aid fund is it? What a responsible village chief.”

“That’s right! It’s fine if Gis join us for the feast!”

Some money would be collected from the villagers and that fund would be used to help them when they fell sick or got into an accident.

If there was excess money, it would be returned to everyone or used for public projects. For this village, it comes in the form of a feast.

However, Regis could not attend the feast as he did not take part in the mutual aid.

It’s enough to just ask around—— Thinking that way, Regis followed Narissa.

Together with Abidal Evra, they set off towards the village.

Compared to the village chief's house, the older buildings were slightly smaller The reason it was chosen was probably

it was located at a corner of the village.

There’s a feast—— From that, Regis thought that there would be many food and alcohols prepared as the villagers gathered to have fun.

However, things were different from what Regis thought. There were not much food and the villagers were sitting beside each other on the floor with a serious expression.

The house was big enough to accommodate about forty people.

However, there were no chairs or tables.

Narissa opened her eyes wide.

“Ahh?! Where’s the food?!

“Ahh, sorry, today is a little… …”

The middle aged man that was speaking kindly to Narissa had his expression changed upon seeing Regis.

“A soldier?!”

The villagers inside the house stood up noisily.

There were some who also picked up fish spears and others kind of tools.

Regis tilted his head.

However, Abidal Evra was not as foolish as Regis as he drew his sword out and stood in front of Regis.

“Sir strategist, quickly leave this area! Please meet up with the other knights!”

The other knight guards also drew their swords.

The remaining villagers also took out their spears and hatchet and took an offensive posture.

Regis was still standing there in a daze.

“Ahh, wait a second.”

“Can’t Sir strategist sense the danger upon seeing this scene?!”

“That is why… Could both parties calm down and talk it out? Calm and reasonably.”

Regis pressed down Abidal Evra’s sword and walked forward.

Towards the villagers, who was frankly speaking, emitting murderous intent.

There were about thirty people.

While their age varies, all of them were male.

Narissa was pale under such dangerous atmosphere while Fippo stood in front of her to protect her.

Regis sat on down of the wooden floor.

“As you can see, I’m not equipped with any weapon.”

Although the nobles would only sit on chairs, Regis was a commoner which was why he was used to this.

“I’m Regis Auric, Third Grade Admin Officer of the Fourth Imperial Army.”

“I’m the village chief, Jean Leo.”

He was younger than Regis expected. He looked about forty.

Regis thought he was older because of his position as village chief and that he hurt his waist.

He had reddish-black skin and had sharp eyes.

His was tall and full of muscles.

Regis spoke calmly.

“While I’m a soldier, my views are different from those in the navy. Looks like some problems had occurred… … Is it possible that you tell me about it?”

The villagers looked at each other.

If it was past Regis who encountered these aggressive men, he would have been frightened to the point that he could not speak or even leak a little. However, he was used to this after experiencing various things.

If Regis gave them time to discuss, it would be troublesome later on. While he could guess what they wanted to do, it was

necessary to be clear what they were discontented about.

Without waiting for the village chief to speak, Regis continued his words.

“That reminds me… It’s been almost a month that the navy have come to this village. I believe that they had brought much trouble to you. Did you receive any compensation?”

“Compensation?”

The village chief bit the bait.

Regis nodded.

“For borrowing items, providing food or helping out with manual work. The compensation would be paid according to their equivalent value.”

“We did not receive anything at all.”

“If that’s the case, let me communicate with them in your stead. It’s alright, you will be paid properly.”

“Ugh… …”

The villagers whispered among themselves.

The killing intent from earlier had lightened quite a bit.

This time, Regis waited for them to speak.

Finally, the village chief sat properly and said:

“Sir soldier, would you really give us the money?”

“Definitely.”

The atmosphere was finally fit for speaking calmly.

Regis sighed a breath of relief in his heart.

If it was not about money—— For example, the soldiers mistreating the villagers, they would not even accept the compensation. Thankfully it did not deteriorate that far yet.

“The western region of this area is under the jurisdiction of the Fourth Imperial Army. The commander is Lieutenant General Marie Quatre Argentina du Belgaria. Have you heard of her? She’s the fourth princess of Belgaria.”

“Yes, I have heard of that name before.”

“As she was acknowledged for her achievement, Field Marshall Latreille appointed her. As Her Highness is a smart and fair person, she would thoroughly think through things if you explain things clearly to her.”

Regis mixed a little lie within there.

The one who will be considering the situation would be Regis himself.

The admin work is going to increase again—— Regis sighed in his heart.

***

The next day afternoon——

Regis took Narissa’s boat once more to enter the sea and finally concluded his observation.

Upon returning, he realised that the village looked as if surrounded by a large army.

The flag was green with a white shield.

“Looks like Her Highness has arrived.”

“That’s right!”

Abidal Evra nodded happily.

As expected, seeing their comrades in an unfamiliar place made them more relaxed.

Upon reaching the shore, Fippo took a rope from the boat and jumped down. He ran to the embankment to tie the boat down to a piling.

Regis alighted from the boat with his measuring equipment.

He wanted to alight on his own, but he was still having a little seasick, thus was feeling weak.

Told you so! Narissa said while helping out Regis.

“Are you alright, Gis?”

“Ahh, thanks.”

Her hand that was slender and soft under the setting sun was as strong as huge tree branch.

Finally, Regis got onshore.

Leaving aside whether the sand would enter her shoes, she did not sway at all while supporting Regis which showed how reliable she was.

Regis wanted to pick up the luggage that he threw onto the ground, but Narissa had already picked it up for him.

“I will hold that for you, aren’t you still a little seasick?”

“Haha… … It’s better than yesterday… … but you’re a great help.”

“What are you planning to do after this?”

“Looks like Her Highness had arrived. She should be discussing with the vice-admiral right now… … Most likely, we have to engage the enemy soon… …”

“That… …”

Narissa who was always energetic spoke softly which was a

rare occurrence.

“Hm? What is it?”

“I’m sorry about yesterday. For them to show such a scary appearance to you… …”

I should be the one to apologise. As the country continued to collect taxes, how can we let the citizens carry such a big burden just because the country is being invaded? This is a fault that we should frown on.”

“It’s great that everyone accepted you because of your words.”

“It isn’t something amazing.”

“Someone from the military came over this morning. It seems like they came to discuss about the compensation. Everyone was looking so impatient recently, but now, everyone’s expression had become much better!”

“In the first place, the vice-admiral intended to pay. It’s just that he was too busy that he forgotten about it.”

“Even so, it was thanks to you!”

Narissa leaned closer to Regis.

Regis back away a little.

“Not at all… …”

Actually, the navy did not intend to pay.

Regis appealed to vice-admiral Bertram last night.

“I believe that you know this… That Her Highness Marie Quatre Argentina du Belgaria is a philanthropist that cares deeply for her citizens. What she hates the most are the country and the nobles squeezing dry the citizens. If she realised that you did not remunerate the villagers while she’s in charge of the western region, won’t your position as an admiral worsen? Being generous to the villagers now is also for the future. Furthermore, this remuneration is a small price to please a royalty… … If you pay the villagers to settle the problem, you can still even get some reimbursement back.”

While Bertram was an old-styled soldier, he was not a stubborn fool.

Rather, he was grateful to Regis who considered his position

and quickly sent someone to pay the villagers

To Regis, it was more important to gain the admiral’s trust than gaining the villagers’ gratitude.

In order to carry out the battle to sink High Britannia’s supply ships, gaining the navy’s cooperation was necessary and more effective than the letter of appointment.

However, Narissa did not know to such things.

So she kept expressing her gratitude to him.

“That! To tell the truth, my first impression of you is someone who’s weak and unreliable… … However, it seems you’re someone reliable!”

“H-Hahaha… …”

Fippo who just returned from loading the equipment spoke impatiently.

“Narissa, stop seducing him.”

“Ha?! I’m not! What~? Could it be that you’re jealous?”

“S-Stop joking around!!”

All of a sudden, Abidal Evra pointed at a certain direction.

“That, isn’t that Her Highness?”

Regis shifted his sight to where Abidal Evra pointed.

There was a large group of knights on the beach beyond the village’s embankment.

At the front of them was a girl with red hair and eyes.

“Regis——!!”

“Ah! Alt… … Hm…”

Without noticing, I almost called her nickname. There’re villagers and soldiers around… It’s best to use polite speech.

Altina’s guards were running after her and shouting “Please wait! Your Highness! Please wait for us…!!”

Although Altina was wearing lightly equipped, only Jerome could possibly catch up with Altina who was running at full

speed in the entire Fourth Imperial Army.

Just when Regis was still thinking about such thing, Altina had already reached him.

“Regis!”

“Your Highness, I’m glad to see you that you’re full of energy.”

Regis said so while lowering his head.

However, Narissa who was at the side grabbed onto Regis’ arm.

A soft and comfortable sensation could be felt at his elbow.

“Who’s this person, Gis?’

“Ahh?! T-This person here is the commander of the Fourth Imperial Army, Lieutenant General Marie Quatre Argentina du Belgaria. She has the highest military rank in this western region and also the fourth imperial princess.”

“That’s not it. I’m asking what is she to you?”

“Me?! Erm… … She’s my employer?”

“Ahh, is that so! So this noble princess here, isn’t Gis’ lover! She’s just a noble person that employed Gis!”

The only one who got a scare hearing Narissa’s words was Regis while Altina only widened her eyes.

Following that, Altina spoke coldly.

“Regis…?”

Looks like she’s quite angry...

Never before did she have—— No, this is probably the same when Eleanor fooled around by kissing me.

Regis was sweating buckets.

“Y,your Highness? Is there anything wrong? Erm, this person here is Narissa, who’s helping me with investigating the area.”

“Eh~~”

Regis was given a cold look.

Altina turned and walked away without saying anything.

Regis brushed away Narissa’s arm in a panic and chased after Altina.

“T-That… … Your Highness? Are you feeling unwell anywhere? Or is it that I have done something wrong? As it was too sudden, there’re still many things I have yet to report… …”

“That’s right. There’s only work to talk about with me!”

“Eh? Well, it’s correct to call it work… …”

“It’s just like what Clarisse said!”

“W-What do you mean?”

“Nothing at all! You’re just my strategist! We are not l-lovers anyway! W-what you do with others and where have nothing to do with me! That’s why… she being your lover is fine… … Ughhh… … Idiot!”

“That can’t happen! Something like being my lover! Even if the sea evaporated, it’s also impossible!”

Ehh?! Narissa let out a voice in surprised.

Narissa wanted to chase after Regis but was stopped by Fippo. He spoke with a serious tone.

“You should stop now, Narissa! You could be charged of Lese Majesty by speaking casually in front of a royalty!”

“W-What does that mean?!”

“Really… … You’re an idiot when it comes to things unrelated to the sea… … You’re fine right now because Lady Marie Quatre is kind… … Normally, your speech earlier could result in you being sent to the guillotine.”

“Eek?!”

“We’re worlds apart… …We are commoners while she’s a royalty… …”

“How can that be… …”

Narissa looked at the direction Regis was going while feeling dejected.

For a moment, Regis looked back because he was a little concerned.

While he was happy that she was close to him, Regis was someone about to enter the battlefield.

It’s best not to get involved too deeply. I’m a soldier in a war while she’s just a civilian.

Regis did not slow down in chasing after Altina.

***

Dusk——

The headquarters used by the navy was now called ‘Fourth Imperial Army’s headquarter. Though it was still the village chief’s house.

Altina sat on a sofa while to her left was vice-admiral Bertram, his assistant and the warship captains.

To her right was Jerome who had an impatient look and also the captains of other units.

Regis who was Altina’s strategist was standing by her side.

The increase in garrison unit was not just the navy, but also the knights. The room that was not that wide got even more crowded.

Everyone who was present here had already exchanged greetings.

“——Then let’s start the war council.”

Regis took a deep breath.

Altina was given the authority by Latreille, which was why the navy were supposed to obey her.

Leaving aside the fleet admiral… Regis’ idea would be carried out with much difficulty if they failed to receive the captains’ acknowledgement.

That was because of Altina’s personality. She definitely would not like it if she were to use her authority to force others to submit to her.

Regis opened the sea chart which was on the table.

“There’s something I want to confirm first… When would the

Poseidon class ship be arriving?”

It was estimated that the slow Poseidon class ship equipped with hundred and twenty guns was to arrive here today from the southern sea.

Bertram had a bitter look

“Well, that’s ship won’t move without wind after all… … From communicating with them, we estimate they would reach here around dusk… …”

“Understood. Then, we would begin the operation tomorrow morning. First, the battle would occur at——”

Regis began explaining his plans.

The naval officers who was listening and nodding at the start paled after some time.

Bertram hesitated.

“T-That… … Are they no other options?”

“This is already the best strategy I can come up with… Perhaps I may be able to come up with a better one, but we

don’t have the time to expect something like that. If we are late in sinking the enemy’s supply ships, the enemy would receive a large quantity of supplies. This would cause the capital to fall and also inflict a damage to the Empire that not even a hundred years would be enough to recover from.”

“Ughh… …”

Bertram was a little taken aback.

Even if the capital falls, the nation would not immediately be destroyed.

Against an opponent that was not even twenty thousand, Belgaria’s emperor would not simply take the beating lying down.

However, if the emperor was to escape, neighbouring countries would rush here and the lords who submitted to Belgaria through force would rise to rebellion.

They dare not to imagine how vulnerable the Empire would be if that happened.

Regis shifted his sight to the sea chart.

“Then, I will continue explaining the battle plan. High Britannia’s princess class 74 guns ships uses the Triple-Expansion Steam Piston Engine to move. The most important point is the screw propeller below their hull. I believe everyone here know they can move without any wind.”

“Definitely, that is the most troublesome point.”

Bertram and those in the navy had a surprised look.

“Eh? In terms of boats, the propeller is their sails… … So that should be considered a weaknesses. However, that isn’t something we can hit it easily. Not only is the propeller small, it is also located under the water. It’s possible to hit them if we’re on land, however boats are something that will sway. It’s even more difficult when we exchanged fire.”

“As expected, it’s hard to hit the propeller… … Well, it’s true that the propeller is located at a difficult place, but it’s alright. I have a countermeasure for that.”

“Could you elaborate on it?”

“Definitely.”

The admiral and the captains who had a stern face looked puzzled after hearing his explanation. This was probably what

they meant when describing something you don’t trust completely, but hope to be true..

This can’t be helped. Regis thought.

As captains, they were more used to thinking themselves than listening to commands. Furthermore, the idea that was proposed today was unorthodox.

Though the most important point was that Regis’ achievements was only in land battle, which meant nothing to the navy. Furthermore, his age and rank was lower than theirs, so it was unlikely for them to be convinced right off the bat.

However, there was no time to gain their trust.

“How about it…?”

“Ah, it isn’t impossible.”

However, Bertram and the rest could not make up their mind.

Altina stared at the admiral.

“How is it? Is Regis’ idea possible?”

“No matter what, this is unprecedented. We won’t know without trying… …”

“Is it worth a try?”

“Probably.”

“And we just have a perfect candidate to try on. Since we aren’t god and can’t say anything for sure… … But let’s do our best for those who died in this war.”

Altina’s words were unexpectedly heavy. She probably was affected by the battle earlier on. Although she was a beautiful and dignified girl, she also had an unfathomable strength.

Bertram nodded in shame. He shut his mouth tight and stood up, putting his right fist on his left chest and saluted.

“As you will. I will spare no effort on it!”

“I’ll leave it to you, thank you.”

“Understood!”

Following that, Bertram turned to his subordinates.

And spoke to them with a tone usually used on confidants.

“Gentlemen, I believed that everyone of you still have some hesitation as we never have done anything similar to what this strategist had proposed… … However, are we just going to await defeat to come? This isn’t the attitude the prideful Imperial Navy should have!”

“Does the admiral think this is workable…?”

A middle aged captain asked.

Bertram shook his head.

“That, I do not know… … However, do we have any other choice? We went to Trouin’s sea battle full of confident that we would win. However, I believe everyone here know the result, we couldn’t triumph against their steamships… … Aren’t you ashamed of yourself just because you’re afraid of trying that new idea and wasting your time away?!”

“Ku… … We aren’t afraid… …”

The captain muttered while wavering.

Altina gave them a final push.

“I’m willing to listen if there’s an alternative. However, Regis had already said it. We do not have the time to wait for a strategy that may or may not come. We can only use the best strategy available to us. The enemy will not be waiting for you.”

Despite feeling a little worried, the captains did not object anymore.

They were the admiral’s subordinates. Different from soldiers inland, they were more independent.

Conversely, if they were willing to help, they would be united as one.

The living room fell into silent for quite some time.

A rather plump captain sudden stood up.

“Uhuhu! Isn’t that interesting! Let’s blow away High Britannia in one go!”

Finally, the other captains also stood up and saluted.

“Just as Your Highness had said, allow us to participate in this battle.”

The captain earlier on spoke with a shameful tone for wavering for a moment.

The fleet admiral once more saluted to Altina.

“I’ll go and prepare for the battle now!”

“Thank you. I’m grateful to hear this from you. I’ll leave it to you.”

Altina had a gentle look and returned a salute.

***

After the admiral and his subordinates left, Abidal Evra and the guards also left the house to guard outside.

Leaving aside Regis, there were only Altina and Jerome.

Hu~ Altina leaned on the sofa.

“That’s great. We can finally proceed with the battle.”

Hmph! Jerome sneered.

“I heard that Bertram had suffered a loss before this. If we win, he can make up for his defeat. If we lose, he could blame it on us outsiders. What a thankless job, isn’t it, Regis?”

He said in a mocking tone to Regis.

Regis shrugged.

“Thanks to that, we obtained their cooperation… … If we didn’t do that, I do not know when we we have a conclusion…”

Altina frowned.

“This shouldn’t be a time to pursue whose responsibility is this!”

“That’s right. Even though it isn’t as exaggerated that the Empire will perish soon… … But it can’t be helped. I do not have any achievement in the sea and asking them to believe me is impossible.”

“But, they would believe you once the first part of your plan succeed.”

“It would be great if that’s the case… …”

Jerome laughed and asked.

“What? Can it succeed?”

“It will succeed… At least for the first part.”

“How confident.”

“That isn’t it… … I just happen to know it… … I’m not that confident. It’s just as the princess said, we had to obtain their trust even we are to suffer some losses. Though they would believe me once there’s some result.”

He placed such a large bet on the naval battle because of an even more dangerous battle that will come after. Hence this was necessary.

Jerome looked at the sea chart.

“Well, that’s right… … It would succeed for sure. After all, it’s your forte in using those unpleasant trickeries in battles.”

“No no, it isn’t unpleasant at all.”

“Hmph… … It isn’t just the enemy who’s getting fooled, isn’t it?”

“N-No, That is… … simply using all strategies available to its limits.”

Regis lowered his head.

Jerome continued to smirk.

“Well, that’s fine. I’ll leave the sea battle to you. So? I will stay behind to guard the place? Don’t tell me you’re asking me to board the ship?”

“If possible, I wanted you to rest as much as possible… … However, problems could arise if we do not properly watch how things unfold… …”

“I’m fine with it unless I’m not bored. Just riding the horse would dull my sword.”

Beside Jerome, Altina stretched her body over.

“Is Regis going to board the ship?”

“That’s right… … I’ll be accompanying the admiral since the important point is in the sea.”

“I’m going too if that’s the case!”

“Eh?!”

“I’m going even if you say no! There is nothing to do on land if the sea battle succeeds, right? If that’s the case, I’ll definitely go!”

“No, that is… …”

Looks like I won’t be able to convince her—— Regis thought. Altina would not go back on her words at such situation.

After thinking for awhile, Regis dropped his shoulders.

“Haa… … It can’t be helped.”

She’s always in her own pace. While she looked like she’s not considering anything, she actually thought things through. Furthermore, she always acts according to her beliefs.

“Does Regis think that it’s better if I’m not there?”

“That isn’t the case… … Even if the chances of getting hit are one out of a hundred volleys, leaving aside the distance, we would not get hit normally… … However, there is still one out of hundred chance that would hit us… … If it’s you, you definitely will not lose in a close combat. However, you wouldn’t be able to do anything when the cannonball comes flying… … Please don’t forget that.”

“Even I know about that!”

“Also… … You have to listen to the captain while you’re on the boat. Even though the captains are under the command of the admiral, you still have the authority to strip them of their position if you wish. However, the sailors would only listen to someone that they are used to, understand?”

“Yes! I promised!”

“Well… … In my opinion, it’s better if you stay on land. Any wrong move would result in three seventy-four guns ship surrounding us, which is two hundred twenty three guns blowing us to bits.”

“We just need to avoid doing the wrong moves!”

“Ha,haha… …”

“That reminds me, can’t you be a captain? Did you not read it before?”

“I will get seasick… …”

“Ah, is that so?”

“How about you?”

“I sail down a lake with a small boat before?”

“I experienced it before too, but this is totally different. Well, the military ships should be more stable than fishing ships… Probably… … However, are you fine if the sailors laughed at you, a princess, getting seasick and fainted?”

“That could be more worrying than getting attacked by the cannons… …”

For the first time, Altina showed a disheartened look.

Jerome had a ‘could not be bothered’ face and went out to grab some alcohol.

“You guys can have fun getting seasick while I go get sick from a hangover.”

Chapter 3 - All Ships, Fire Broadside!

As the sailors prepared to leave the village, the homes of the farmers that were housing them temporarily became empty.

By right, the lodging should be returned to the villagers, but the expedition that brought the soldiers of Fort Sierck from one end of the Empire to the other end had very nearly exhausted their strength.

Those who were not doing too well stayed behind in Fort Le Troyeti.

The villagers expressed their understanding and loaned their houses to the soldiers to stay for the night.

The battle will begin tomorrow, Jerome will lead most of the troops towards Fort Le Troyeti.

Regis tossed and turn on the bed of the house he was staying in.

The time was 9PM.

After asking about the navy and finalizing the upcoming plans with Jerome, it was already late in the night.

The illumination came from candles, the quality seemed to be subpar and the light was quite dim.

But he could still see the item in his hands clearly.

“Well then…”

Regis took out a book from his luggage.

During the march from the capital to the west, they stopped by a large city once. This new book was brought right then.

Regis opened the book as he laid on his bed.

The story was about a group of protagonists trapped in a game world going on an adventure to save a girl who had been targeted by ruffians.

The main character being a swordsman was a typical development. Just like Duke Eddie who stayed behind at Fort

Sierck.

However, the main character of this story was a young man who used support magic to help his comrades…

As he read the interesting story, the world around him seemed to be fading away as light and sound diminished. He didn’t even know where he was right now.

“Hmm, it is moments like this that make me glad that I am alive.”

“We are setting off tomorrow before dawn…”

“Well, it is troublesome to ride on a boat, but I am afraid that I couldn’t get up from bed if it is too dark outside.”

In the time before dawn, the inside of the room was darker than the outdoors which was illuminated by the moonlight. It was so dark that you couldn’t see your fingers.

It would be great if he could lit a candle within the reach of his arms, but unfortunately, Regis wasn’t familiar with the layout of the room.

And so, in order to leave in a moment’s notice, Regis reminded himself repeatedly that he was facing the door when he slept, didn’t change out of his clothes, and tuck his packed belongings right besides the bed.

“The preparations are already done… Eh, Ms Clarisse!?”

He wasn’t sure when, but a lady wearing a green apron dress came in without him noticing.

Clarisse sighed and said:

“Sir Regis, you are the same as usual.”

“W-What is it? Did something happen? Altina calling for me?”
“As she needs to wake up early tomorrow, the princess has already turned in. Sir Regis, aren’t you going to sleep?”

“Of course I will sleep. It is easy to get seasick due to lack of sleep. I just wanted to read a little before I retire…”

“I see I see.”

Clarisse smiled gently. Sigh, she did insist that Regis must describe her as gentle.

If this goes on, the candle would be taken away by her again.

“Erm… If I don’t finish the book, I would be bothered by the story and be unable to sleep.”

“You know your eyes have turned red?”

“Well, my eyes do hurt, but that is probably because I am not used to the sea breeze. At least let me finish the part about them clearing the dungeon raid…”

“I understand. Well then, I will read it to you. You should rest your eyes and body.”

“Ehh!?”

Clarisse reached for the candle.

“If you are unwilling, then just rest well.”

“Waahh! W-Well… Please do so.”

“Alright.”

Clarisse seemed jubilant as she picked up the book besides Regis’ pillow and sat on the bed, making it creak.

“Fufufu, if her highness sees this, she will definitely misunderstand.”

“Eh? What misunderstanding?”

“… Nothing at all. Well then, please close your eyes, Sir Regis… It’s useless even if you look at me.”

In the flickering candlelight, her profile and shadow was shaking. Under the shine of the faint light, the slight swell of her chest was charmingly tempting.

It felt strange for Regis to look at her from a different angle. After Regis had lied down, Clarisse sat very close to him.

There was a faint fragrance of tea.

Brown pupils were looking his way.

Regis felt his chest tightened and heart race. He was lying down but his breathing became ragged.

Clarisse averted her eyes with her cheeks blushing.

“If you stare at me from such a close distance, I will feel shy.”

“Ah… S-Sorry, because you are too beautiful…”

“Eh?”

She widened her eyes.

Regis covered his mouth as if he had misspoken.

“W-What did I say!?”

“… Erm… Such words… Cannot be uttered lightly alright?”

“That’s true. I wanted to compliment you, but such words that only judge the appearance of a woman is really…”

“No, that’s not the problem… If Regis says something like that now, I might not be able to hold back, okay?”

“Hah…?”

“Tomorrow is an important day, so not now… Alright, close your eyes.”

She reached out and closed Regis’ eyes gently.

He could feel her cool soft fingers and gentle fragrance.

Regis closed his eyes obediently.

Clarisse started reading.

It was in a volume that only Regis who was lying down could hear, but she spoke very clearly and was pleasing to the ears.

Leaving aside such technical stuff as the word's reading and the intonation, which were perfect, what pleased him more than anything else was the fact that Clarisse was reading just for Regis.

How wonderful.

Ignoring the reigning Emperor, in the past, there was a position of bard in the courts. And among the nobles, there were also servants who whispered to their masters who were lying on a pillow.

It seemed that he was enjoying the life of a noble, which filled Regis momentarily with joy.

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The next morning—

The sky was still dark and the stars were sparkling.

“By the way, according to Marshall Latreille’s orders, all the units here would be assigned to the Imperial 4th Army… Both the navy and the army units. This part is a bit difficult to understand.”

When she heard what Regis said, Altina tilted her head.

“Since Vice Admiral Bertram is the Fleet Admiral, just calling

it Fleet Bertram should be fine right?”

Putting it that way is wrong! Bertram shook his head.

“Since your highness is the commander in chief, and would be on board the flagship in person, the fleet should be named ‘Fleet Marie Quatre Argentina de Belgaria’,”

Regis agreed with him.

“… The Fleet Admiral would still command the sea battle, but it would be hard to say ‘Fleet Bertram, move out’ in the presence of the princess.”

“Don’t worry about me alright?”

“Please spare me, your highness. I will get mocked by my subordinates.”

“But my name is too long. Ah, to save time, just call it ‘Fleet Regis’ then!?”

“No!”

That name was too weird.

However, Bertram was all for it.

“I have no problem with this. If this is for the sake of the battle, I won’t mind as long as the name is appropriate.”

“... Have mercy on me. Well, let’s name it ‘Western Liberation Fleet’. The objective of the battle is to sink the High Britania supply ships and retake Chainboule Harbour anyway.”

Bertram nodded.

“The name fits the goal.”

“Well, it’s fine since Regis said so.”

And it was decided.

In order for large ships to dock, a harbour with deep waters was needed.

And of course, the fishing village didn’t have such facilities.

It would take some time, but it was necessary to walk out to the trestle and take small shuttle boats in order to board the large ships in deeper waters.

Regis was escorted onto the shuttle boats.

The one who went with him was just Altina, there were no other escorts, not a single soldier from Fort Sierck.

It was only the two of them this time.

Clarisse didn’t tag along either. She stayed behind and did her chores. She couldn’t go to a battlefield.

Abidal Evra did insist on following as an escort.

However, warships were not leisure cruise, and couldn’t let too many untrained sailors to board. Also, a knight escort would be useless against the cannons used in sea battles.

If the navy had any schemes in mind, it would be meaningless even if they brought more escorts. They could only trust the navy, and Altina wouldn’t be boarding the flagship if she didn’t.

Altina will be boarding a ship that was lighter than she imagined for the first time.

She carefully helped Regis board.

The boat rocked with the waves.

The sailors slowly rowed the boat away from the trestle amidst their spirited shout.

They slowly drifted away from land.

When Regis went out to sea the day before to prepare for sea battle, he felt weird when he sailed away from land.

In the sky, there was the white moon as well as there were many stars.

The weather seemed to be good.

A sea breeze that could only be felt after going out to sea.

The shuttle boat headed into the deep sea.

Regis looked nonchalantly at the breakwater.

The hill ridges were turning white.

“… Ah.”

On the breakwater, a small figure stood against the sky that was gradually turning white.

It might be a vague silhouette, but Regis recognized her.

With hair that had the colour of blazing fire, the girl— Narissa looked his way.

Although she wouldn’t be able to see him from that place.

Regis was thankful from the bottom of his heart.

Thank you very much for your assistance. We will definitely protect this country, please take care…

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Imperial year 851 June 1st—

The ‘Western Liberation Fleet’ set off from the fishing village.

There were a total of forty four warships in the fleet.

The capital ships consisted of nine Athena class three battleship (80 guns). Slightly smaller than the primary force would be fourteen Selene class four ship (50 guns), and twenty Ouranos corvette (18 guns).

The Athena class might be inferior to the enemies’ Princess class 74 guns battleship in terms of firepower and speed, but it could match the firing range.

Total length of 120Co (53m), 34Co (15m) wide, mast height of 140Co (62m).

As they had the advantage in numbers, a naval battle should be possible if they decided to ignore the losses.

But of course, war with other nations will continue after repelling the High Britannia invasion, so they couldn’t lose

ships too casually…

Selene class was commissioned to maintain security in domestic waters, so it wasn’t really adequate as a battleship.

It was less than 80Co (36m) long. Most of the guns were small to mid sized. It was mainly utilized to pursue pirates and smugglers. Its armour was thin, and would find it hard to exchange fire with the High Britannia navy.

The Ouranos was 45Co (20m) long, less than half the size of a capital ship.

If powered fully by sail, its speed would probably be faster than a Princess class. However, it couldn’t be counted on to be of much use in a cannon battle.

Other than these, there was also a battleship larger than all the other warships, Poseidon class one battleship (120 guns). Total length 160Co (71m), 45 Co (20m) wide, there were only two such colossal vessels in the Empire.

However, only one of the Poseidon class would be taking part in this sea operation— Ship number 2. They weren’t being stingy with their warships, it’s just that ship number 1 was

still under maintenance.

Repair and maintenance of battleships tends to take a very long time. That’s why two or more of the same type of battleship would be built at the same time, so a similar class warship could be committed to the frontlines at any time. It would be more ideal if there were three ships.

If the model of the ships were different, the controls would be different too. But there wasn’t time to teach the sailors how to man a ship in the frontlines. If the fresh sailors couldn’t even get the basics down, the ship would fall into chaos during a battle.

Even if you teach them by using similar ship models, there would be a limit to that too.

Right now, the third Poseidon class ship was still under construction…

If the plan worked, the construction of the third vessel would be terminated— Regis thought.

Aside from the ships, there were other smaller vessels, such as the shuttle boats that ferried Regis, reconnaissance crafts

and many more. The responsibility they shouldered was equally important, but they couldn’t be relied on to take part in direct battle.

Regis boarded the Athena class three ship Frantam. Not just battleships, the navigation seat of all sailboats was located on the deck— right in front of the poop deck. The symbol of the ship, its steering wheel was right there.

The helmsman would steer the ship according to the instructions of the captain. It was the same for the other sailors too, all hands aboard the ship must obey the captain’s order.

It was not just the ship the Fleet Admiral was on, all the crews in the entire fleet must follow his command.

His orders were conveyed through the flags on the flagship.

Bertram confirmed the situation of the fleet.

“Well then, we will set sail… Is that fine?”

Altina nodded.

“The success of this operation will decide the fate of the Belgaria Empire. I’m counting on all of you.”

“I will keep these words close to my heart.”

Bertram took a deep breath, fixed his hat, then extended his right hand forward.

“—Western Liberation Fleet, move out!!”

Signals sent from flags couldn’t be seen at dawn, so the signaler used a gas lamp to pass the message on to the other vessels.

After hearing the orders of the Fleet Admiral, the captain of the flagship immediately ordered the crew to advance slowly.

Unlike a naval battle, when sailing at night, the flagship would lead the way and signal others through a gas lamp.

There was one on the crow’s nest, one at the ship’s bow, and one on either side of the stern. This allowed the ships behind to know how large the flagship was, and how far away it was.

But if there were any problems causing the lights to go out, it would be troublesome. The strong sea breeze made it hard to relit the gas lamps.

Fortunately, everything went smoothly as the fleet left the fishing village, and headed towards
Chainboule Harbour.

The sky in the east gradually brightened.

“This ship looks much bigger up close!”

“... Well, both types of ships were built by the Belgarian Empire, but the Athena is bigger than a class two vessel.”

Looking from the stern of the ship, the deck leading all the way to the bow seemed endless. Even the mansion of a noble wasn’t this large, this was just like a castle.

The wooden masts pierced the sky and thick canvases draped down from them. The massive sails seemed to encompass the entire field of vision.

This castle that was sailing towards the deep ocean carried

about 500 sailors. It was on the scale of a small village. Bertram would be responsible for the ships out in the sea, and he was consolidating the reports from all ships thoroughly.

It seemed that some equipment was left behind at the harbour during the naval battle of Trouin.

Some of the vessels had received damages that couldn’t be repaired out at sea.

“Admiral! Janvier is moving very slowly!”

It seemed that one of the Ouranos class vessels couldn’t keep up with the speed of the fleet.

“… Don’t overdo it, let her change course to the third rendezvous point.”

“Yes Sir!”

The Fleet Admiral seemed busy.

In order to not bother him, Regis and Altina started chatting.

“Anything bothering you?”

“The ship will change directions if we turn that wheel?”

“Ahh, that steering wheel huh. It is connected to the rudder below the ship. By changing the orientation of the sails according to the wind, you can change the course of the ship by turning the wheel.”

“You can change the direction of such a large ship just with that wheel?!”

“Well, to prevent the ship from drifting all over the place, it requires quite a bit of arm strength. It’s not a simple matter of just turning it.”

The Athena class had three masts.

Regis and the others were further to the rear than the third mast.

That’s where the steering wheel was located, the railings would be right behind them. That’s where the Fleet Admiral

was.

In order to let the Fleet Admiral do his work in peace, Regis and Altina kept some distance away.

The ship was huge.

To the rear of the ship was the quarter deck with a raised platform. This place housed the conference room, and the personal quarters of the Captain and Fleet Admiral.

As expected of the flagship Frantam, it even had a royal suite. Altina was staying inside this time.

By the way, it wasn’t mentioned where Regis’ quarters were — He probably was assigned to a luggage cabin below deck like the rest of the sailors.

Sailors were not assigned beds, they would just spread a piece of cloth between the luggage or next to a cannon to sleep. They might hang a hammock from the ceiling to sleep too.

At the very least, I should find my personal piece of cloth…

But that would be a matter to worry about if Regis survived the battle.

The sky brightened gradually.

The flagship used flags to signal its orders to the entire fleet.

In order to catch up with the Poseidon class vessel, the flagship Frantam moved off first, followed by five Athena class. Of the forty four warships, only six vessels made up the main force. In fact, they possessed more than half of the entire fleet’s fighting prowess.

The remaining warships didn’t simply wait in place, they had to fulfill their mission too.

At this moment, the reconnaissance craft reported back.

The adjutant who received it reported to the Fleet Admiral.

“Reporting the number of enemy vessels in Chainboule Harbour! Supply ships eighteen! Princess class six! More than forty small crafts!”

“That many!?”

Bertram said with a frown.

The sailors working on the deck turned rowdy.

The captain looked worried too.

Regis fell into deep thought.

— Seems reality is different from what I imagined.

Bertram looked towards Regis.

He was just seeking the opinion of the strategist who proposed the battle plan.

The adjutant of the Fleet Admiral, Captain of the Frantam, as well as the sailors around them looked his way with a worried expression.

Regis shrugged.

“… The supply ships were not here yesterday, so it probably came last night from their homeland. That might be so… But I already considered the possibility of enemy reinforcement, so it won’t be too big of a problem.”

“Oh? You knew about this information before we even received it?”

“Not really. I merely estimated the forces which the enemy should have had from the battle of Trouin.”

I see, Bertram nodded.

Altina was calm all this while.

“I trust Regis deeply!”

Regis felt happy and uneasy at the same time. He said in a soft voice only Altina could hear:

“… It might sound weird coming from me… But wouldn’t it be dangerous to put too much faith in me?”

“Ahaha, I am not that stupid. I can tell if the situation is within

your expectation or not just by looking at Regis' face."

"... I see, seems like I am not suited to play poker."
"Fufufu, how about a match next time?"

"Are you good in poker?"

"I have beginner's luck, let's give it a try."

Altina smiled, and Regis smiled too.

Bertram was a bit surprised to see them like this.

In this critical situation where the enemy forces were higher than expected, the young strategist and commander showed no sign of fearing or shrinking away.

The adjutant said with an incredulous expression.

"... Erm... They are expressing their confidence in the battle plan?"

"Well, yes."

Bertram nodded lightly.

If that is the case, all we can do is pray. Or do they actually not know what a naval battle is like?

He found it hard to clear the doubts in his mind.

However, they were in the middle of a battle, and he had to consider his position as the Fleet Admiral. He must not utter complains that would lower morale.

Bertram asked the commander in order to confirm his thoughts.

“Even though the enemy forces doubled… we are still going to attack as planned, is that fine?”

“Yes, of course! Let us take back Chainboule Harbour!”

Altina pointed to the cape.

It was a piece of land protruding out into the sea like a spear. Their view was blocked by the forest on the cape, but behind was indeed Chainboule Harbour.

From the gaps of the forest, a tower that had the dual function of lighthouse and watchtower could be seen. It seemed to have been destroyed when the High Britannian army first attacked.

Chainboule Harbour was built in a V shaped bay.

According to the Empire founding war legend, L’Empereur Flamme gave his sword as an offering to pray for victory, that’s why it’s called Épée Prière Bay.

There was more than enough space inside the Épée Prière Bay to conduct a cannon battle.

According to the recon craft reports, there were some sail boats near Chainboule Harbour— 18 large supply ships. Six Princess class warships were docked there too.

The Imperial fleet needed to avoid fighting inside the bay. As the terrain was surrounded by land on three sides, the wind was much weaker there.

The sail ships won’t be able to speed up.

On the other hand, the adversary could move really fast even on the calm ocean surface.

If the imperial navy was the only side that was moving as though they were in quicksand, the battle would be decided in no time.

That might be so, but the enemy warships were deep inside the harbour, they won’t be able to take back Chainboule Harbour if they don’t enter the bay.

With the flagship Frantam leading from the front, the fleet entered the bay in single file formation.

“Enemy vessels sighted!”

The report came from the crow’s nest of the front most mast.

Regis and the others stood in front of the quarter deck focusing their attention ahead as well.

It was just as the report said, twenty odd large vessels were stationed around the harbour.

There were countless small boats.

The High Britannians were not idiots, and had reconnaissance crafts patrolling the entrance of the bay. *They should have discovered our fleet*— the enemy's Princess class was already spewing black smoke.

This was the first time Regis saw a steamship, he had only read about this new generation of ship from books so far.

The basic structure didn't differ much from the previous generations of war ships, it was still a ship that was mainly built from wood. On either side were numerous gun ports.

It was a steamship, but it still erected three masts, maintaining the function of a sails.

Altina tilted her head.

"Regis? Isn't that a steamship? Why does it still have sails?"

“To be more accurate, the Princess class is actually a hybrid between steam and sail ship. It has both a steam engine and sails.”

At this time, ships that ran solely on the steam engine didn’t exist. And as a military vessel, there was the need to consider the steam engine malfunctioning. When the wind was strong in the open sea, using sails would actually be faster.

“Hmmp— how sly of them to use both.”

“Well, if there wasn’t anything exceptionally good about it, they wouldn’t be mass producing such a heavy and expensive machine that consumes lots of coal.”

Between the 1st and 2nd mast of the Princess class, there was a small chimney churning out black smoke.

A steam engine needed to burn coal before it could be used, increasing the pressure of the steam boiler until it reached working level. It seems that the ship had finished its preparations.

The enemy ship started moving.

Trying to keep us away from their supply ships— That’s obvious.

“Get ready for cannon battle!”

Bertram issued a solemn command.

The adjutant relayed the order loudly to the seamen below deck.

When the captain and sailors heard that order, they prepared to fire their guns.

The signaller relayed the order to the warships behind, and they began opening the gun ports.

Normally, one cannon would be operated by two men. The men in the next room were responsible for loading the gunpowder.

The main cannons used by the Athena class were the super sized imperial warship cannons. It was front loaded, the gunpowder sack was rammed in, followed by the cannon ball.

A thin needle was inserted through the breech and pierced the bag of gunpowder.

The needle was pulled out, gun powder poured into the hole it made, and the preparation for firing the cannon was complete. After taking aim at the enemy ship, all that was left was to wait for the orders to fire.

The cannon wasn’t fixed to the deck, but loaded on a four wheeled gun carriage. The gun carriage was tied to the hull with chains.

It gave the cannons a certain level of freedom, making it easier to aim to the left and right, and to ease the recoil after firing the cannon.

However, the ships would shake violently during a cannon battle, and aiming would be difficult.

The cannons were ignited using the flintlock, this way of ignition was the same as the cannons on land.

The enemy vessels drew closer.

The range of the Princess class was about 45Ar (3216m).

It was only 28Ar (2715m) for the Athena class.

The difference was obvious.

However, technology that allowed precision measurements at such a distance had yet to be developed. Even if a surveyor was present, the accuracy of the cannons weren’t that high. In the end, it was up to the gut feeling of the Fleet Admiral.

The inbounding Princess class turned it’s rudder to its right.

“Enemy ship, right rudder!”

It was turning its port side this way.

For animals, the belly was its weakness, but it was the opposite for warships where its weapons were placed on its flanks.

Altina tilted her head.

“If this continues, wouldn’t we be shot by them?”

“… Erm, yes.”

While Regis was mumbling, the port side of the enemy warship was already covered in black smog.

A moment later, the sound of thundering roar was heard.

Even though it was quite a distance away, the sound of the cannon was still enough to shake their heart.

— It was still too far.

Regis thought.

Even though the Princess class had very long range, it was still hard to score a hit when the distance was too far. It wasn’t that easy to hit from that far away.

His mind understood this clearly.

But his legs couldn’t stop shaking.

“…!!”

Countless cannon balls flew over.

Black dots didn’t come over horizontally, but seemed to be falling from the sky.

The speed of the cannon balls will slow down because of air resistance, so the shots would be fired at an angle.

The cluster of shots came straight towards the flagship Frantam Regis and the others were on.

And crashed spectacularly into the sea!

Numerous splashes came up from the ocean surface.

Not just Regis’ back, even the sails on the tall masts were wet from the splashing sea water.

The sea rippled, and the warships undulated with it like leaves in the waters.

“Ugh, ugh…!!”

Regis needed to exert all his strength just to hang on to the railing.

It should be the same for Altina— Regis thought. However, she was standing steadily on the deck, not even holding on to the railing.

“Why aren’t we shooting back?!”

“Because… it’s still too far… probably.”

The second wave of attack reached.

The reloading speed was too fast!

Regis shut his eyes.

The only thing he could do now was pray.

The roar of the cannon shook the heavens and the sea, the water splashed onto the ship like rain. It seemed the deck was going to be shaken apart.

“Waahhh.”

“One of our ships sunk!”

When he heard Altina’s voice, Regis wiped away the sea water on his face and opened his eyes, and felt a sharp pain.

“It hurts!”

Sea water got into his eyes, it was so painful that he thought he was injured.

His mouth tasted salty.

His nose was stinging and tears came out.

When Regis took part in land battles, he wasn’t this troubled. After all, he did train as a cadet.

But his first sea battle experience was much tougher than what was described in the books.

That was to be expected— there wasn’t any distasteful novels describing the heroes of seafaring battles feeling pain

because seawater got into their eyes.

After rubbing his eyes hard, Regis finally opened them.

Altina was nowhere to be found.

Did she fell off the deck!?

He felt that his vision darkened for an instance.

At this moment, her voice came from above. Was he being summoned by the heavens? But it was still too early for that.

“Regis! Another ship caught fire!”

Following the voice, he found Altina scaling to the top of the quarter deck and looking to the back.

Like a child climbing up stairs excitedly.

Although the ship was shaking so violently that Regis thought he would be flung out, she was moving as though she was on dry land.

Or was it that Regis was just too weak?

No, even the sailors were hanging on the nets on the deck for dear life.

Altina jumped down from the quarter deck.

“Ara!”

“What?! What if you fall into the sea!?”

“Instead of that, the ship is burning!”

“… Well… Ships are made from wood, of course they would burn after being hit by iron balls heated by gunpowder.”

“But there are people on there?!”

Compared to land battles, a naval battle had a higher death rate.

It’s a battle waged with cannons after all.

Even so, Altina still didn’t understand.

“… The waters inside the bay isn’t too cold during this period, they can last for about six hours after falling overboard. At least, they can be rescued by other ships if they swam for a while in the bay— Wah?!”

Another close shot landed near the ship, the splashes soaked the entire deck.

Hah! Altina grabbed on to the railings for the first time.

The bow of the Frantam was hit and smashed!

There was the sound of a crack as loud as lightning.

Completely different from the rolling of the waves.

Regis felt an impact as if he was kicked and flew out. At that moment, he thought that he was going to die.

His arms were pulled suddenly and he returned to his original position.

“Regis?! It is dangerous if you don’t grab onto the railings when the ship is shaking!”

When it is shaking? The ship is always shaking… For Altina, it is not really shaking unless the ship was hit directly?

Regis’ heart pounded and his breathing was ragged, that scary event only lasted for a moment.

“Hah… Hah… Thank… You…”

“Are you fine, Regis?”

“Ah… Ahhh… Why did you know that the cannons were going to hit, Altina?”

“Eh? I was looking at it flying over, so obvious right?”

“Well…”

It was true that one could judge the speed of the cannon after looking at it. However, it would be too difficult to tell if the shot was going to hit or miss for normal people.

The ship was still shaking.

The shot this time seemed to have grazed the sails.

Altina pulled Regis up by his arm, which led to their forehead almost touching.

After getting splashed by the sea water, Altina turned even more brilliant. Her expression had nothing to do with nervousness, Regis felt a different kind of charm from her.

Altina whispered into his ears:

“Can we win?”

“… It will depend on the command abilities of Fleet Admiral Bertram?”

“What about the situation right now?!”

“…It’s going as planned.”

At this moment, the Fleet Admiral made his call.

“Flagship, right rudder!”

“Understood! Right rudder!”

The captain shouted before the adjutant did.

Almost at the same time, the helmsman started turning the wheel.

The adjutant changed the signalling flags as instructed.

— All ships, follow me.

The imperial fleet also turned their port side towards the High Britannian warships.

Making a pass in the opposite direction of the opponent— this was a Head-on Engagement.
<TL: http://en.kancollewiki.net/wiki/Combat#Opening_Stages>

The distance between the two sides were half that of the first cannon attack.

Regis nodded.

Everything was going as planned.

“... The formation of passing by each other. We will only exchange shots for a few rounds, engaged in battle but with minimal accuracy.”

“Can we hit if we can only shoot for a few rounds?”

“That’s right, what will happen?”

If the Fleet Admiral turn left rudder, they would be sailing side by side with the enemy— a Parallel Engagement. Unlike a crossing battle, the accuracy of the cannons would be a hundred percent. For the one manning the cannons, sailing alongside to each other was as good as staying stationary.

If it was a parallel battle, the difference between firepower would become obvious.

According to the objective of this operation, a crossing battle by turning right rudder was the correct choice.

Finally, the imperial warships could bring their guns on the broadside to bear on the enemy vessels.

“All ships, fire broadside!”

They started counterattacking.

In the battle plan drawn up by Regis, this was the first naval attack.

It was a different sense of shaking compared to before.

Regis could feel the vibration under his feet.

Smog rose from the port side that was facing the enemy, covering his field of vision.

It smelled unpleasant.

Breathing was hard, and his eyes hurt from the smoke.

He could barely see anything in front of him.

But they were out in the sea after all, the sea breeze cleared the smog in no time.

His vision cleared once again.

Altina pouted unhappily.

“We didn’t hit anything!”

“The first shot is used to gauge the distance.”

“With the smoke all about, can we really gauge that?”

“That person over there is responsible for gauging the distance.”

The two of them looked up.

The smog that covered the entire ship didn’t reach the crow’s nest on top of the mast.

According to their observation, the sailor on the crow’s nest will signal with flag whether the shot landed far or near. The messenger on the deck will then relay this information to the

cannons on the gun decks.

Information on the ship was relayed by sending runners.

While they were loading for the next shot, the enemy opened fire.

The captain was a veteran of cannon battle, and wouldn’t stand idly by while the opponent fired at him. He ordered the ship to sail in a zigzag line to hinder the enemy from grasping his position.

The second shot that was fired—

Didn’t accomplished much.

There were hits too, but it wasn’t enough to break through the deck of the steamship. It would be meaningless if they destroyed the mast and sails of the opponent anyway.

The enemy could use its steam engine to propel themselves, their decks were thick too.

In the face of the Princess class clad in tough armour, the

shots that did hit didn’t do much. Some parts of the ship did catch fire, but were put out promptly.

In a cannon battle, the chances of a shot landing was one percent— Even if it was an effective shot, it would cause less than ten percent in damage.

When the smoke cleared, Altina squinted her eyes.

“It seemed ineffective.”

“Well, this isn’t really a complaint about the shooting accuracy… But if the face to face shootout could work, I won’t need to come up with battle plans…”

“That’s true.”

This cannon battle was actually ill advised.

Exchanging shots any longer would only be to the Empire’s disadvantage.

A report came from the crow’s nest.

“Allied vessel Feuille is down!”

That’s the second ship.

The Empire lost two Athena class warships.

Fleet Admiral Bertram kept quiet for a moment, and then issued his next order.

“Full right rudder! Pull away from the enemy and head for the south bay!”

“Understood!”

Maybe it was because the cannon battle took place inside the bay, but the difference in combat power was more brutal than expected.

Altina whispered:

“Is this also part of the plan?”

“… To be honest, we are deviating a little. The difference between the firepower and speed are more than I expected,

but still within margins… But the toughness of their armour is a bit too good.”

“I-I see.”

Altina had a worried look, but didn’t say it out loud.

In order to calm her down, Regis said:

“… It will be fine. The main act is just beginning.”

The vanguards of the Western Liberation fleet were six Athena class warships. Two of them were too damaged to be seaworthy, so the crews abandoned the ships as they couldn’t put out the fire.

Soon, the fire reached the ammunition stockpile and the ships sank after an explosion.

Lots of shrapnels flew out, and the sinking ships created a whirlpool. The sailors in the water worked their best to swim away.

But there wasn’t time to rescue them right now. The allied

fleet had retreated to the mouth of the bay, and could only hope the Lord will watch over them.

The remaining four Athena class warship turned full right rudder after the exchange of broadside fire, and started turning back.

They were pulling away from the enemy.

However, they weren’t heading for the exit of the bay, and sailed across the Épée Prière Bay.

The six Princess class on the opposing side also turned right rudder.

Altina pointed at the enemy ships.

“Are they returning to the harbour?”

“No, they should be trying to chase us… However, they need to protect the supply ships in the vicinity, so they want to gain control of the area around the harbour first.”

If the enemy Fleet Admiral was the type to chase after the

prey no matter what, he would charge for the mouth of the bay to intercept the imperial fleet and not let them escape.

If that was the case, the imperial side would change course and attack the supply ships, achieving great results.

— It seems that they wouldn’t let us have our way so easily.

Regis was reminded of the battle of Lafressange.

The de facto commander of the High Britania Royal Army was Colonel Oswald Coulthard.

Regis had never met him, but since he was the commander-in-chief, he must have assigned the task of escorting the supply ships to an excellent Fleet Admiral.

“Regis, the enemy had retreated back into the bay!”

“Well… they are really fast and the wind in the bay is weak…”

“Is this also part of the plan?”

Regis nodded.

“Such a situation is written in books too. It is also written on the navy textbooks. But I don’t know the character of the opposing Fleet Admiral, so we came up with a scenario where we are under his attack to see how he would react… Seemed like their Fleet Admiral is someone who uses steady and cautious tactics, and his captains follow their orders dutifully.”

Regis observed the enemy movement in detail.

Their formation was a little messy, but all the warships executed their orders speedily, there didn’t seem to be any gaps.

— But if that was so, it would be easy to read the enemy’s movement. Seem like the enemy Fleet Admiral needs to shore up on his battle experience.

Regis thought.

He had a calm face, but his heart was uneasy…

Regis was someone who relied more on knowledge and calculations instead of instincts.

The exit of the bay was to the west, the bay was to the east.

The liberation fleet entered the bay from the west and lost two warships after engaging the enemy in the central region — right now, they were sailing towards the south of the bay.

They would run aground if they continued, they had to choose to either turn to the west or east.

The six Princess class serving as the escorts for the High Britania supply ships turned back to the east, keeping the imperials from making a move on the supply ships.

And of course, they didn’t want the imperials to escape so easily, and were in pursuit.

On the flagship Frantam— Altina leaned out from the port side.

“Regis! Regis! They are getting near!”

“… Well, they don’t want to let the imperial fleet inside the bay to escape… They might give it up if we ran away

speedily, but since we are slow, of course they will chase us.”

“We are letting them catch up intentionally?!”

“… Are we?”

Regis grabbed the railings and walked unsteadily towards Bertram. He was exhausted after enduring the shaking of the ship during the cannon battle.

“… Fleet Admiral.”

“Ohh, Mr Strategist, how does your first sea battle feel? It’s not over yet though.”

“To tell the truth… I want to lie in bed and rest right now…”

“I am with you on that. I was cramping a little when I gave the order to withdraw.”

“I see… Well, can you aim for the warships behind the second vessel next time?”

Bertram was a bit surprised.

“The enemy Fleet Admiral is probably Oxford. From the sea battle earlier, you can tell that he is an excellent commander. Instead of shooting right after getting in range, wouldn’t it be better if the warships behind them all got into range?”

“Hmm, well, the opponent is a good commander… I considered that too… Ugh!”

Regis covered his mouth.

Although he was only talking, he couldn’t stand it anymore and puked.

Bertram was stunned.

“Alright, I will attack the warships behind their second vessels, you should take a rest too.”

“… But, I won’t be able to see the enemy that way.”

“Hmm, how about this, just use my room. The room is right in the back of the quarter deck, it will be better to see the situation behind from there, alright?”

“Eh? Is that fine?”

“It’s fine— Oh right, the princess must be tired too, I will let my men escort you to the room and rest.”

The Fleet Admiral said and a young adjutant led Regis and Altina to the quarterdeck and opened one of the room.

“Please, this is the place.”

“… Thank you very much.”

“I am actually not that tired… But I should drink some water.”

Altina followed too.

Behind the conference room was the captain’s quarters.

It wasn’t very big, but compared to the sailors who didn’t even have a bed, it was much better.

The furniture was high class, similar to the room of a noble.

A chair covered by velvet and a bed with silk sheets. A table that seemed to be made from heavy wood was secured to the floor. There were even delicate decorations on the table.

The fire that broke out during the battle was extinguished after much effort, but a fire could be seen in the heath here again.

On the wall inside was a square window, this place was indeed better suited to watch their rear compared to standing in front of the quarter deck.

Regis sat on the chair that was facing that window.

He could see the enemy ships behind them.

“Ah… Looks like we are turning.”

“The orders were given after all.”

The adjutant said as he poured tea.

In the eyes of the enemy, our fleet is turning right, making a pass through the

southern coast before escaping to the west, that's how it looks right?

The adjutant offered the tea to Altina who was looking out of the window.

"Your Highness."

"Thank you."

"Well then, please rest here."

The adjutant saluted and exited the room. It was the courtesy shown by a noble towards a royalty.

As they were in the middle of battle and Altina was the commander, just a military salute would suffice… It seemed that the other party had not completely accepted her as the commanding officer because Altina was too young, and a woman.

Right now, Regis and Altina were alone inside the Captain's quarters.

It was the same everywhere— She shrugged and pulled her

head back from the window.

Downing the tea in one go, she filled the cup just like the adjutant did and offered it to Regis.

“You should drink some too.”

“T-Thanks.”

“I didn’t notice because you were drenched by seawater, but you actually sweated a lot.”

“… That’s right.”

Regis drank the tea to moisten his patched throat.

Altina looked out the window once again.

“The enemy is closer than before… Hey Regis… Why are the High Britanian ships so fast?”

“You know the difference between steamships and sail ships?”

“It’s the burning of coal right? I have seen trains before, and know they are faster than horses. But I don’t know why… That’s not it, I want to know why the Empire can’t make something similar?”

“Yes… This is the difference in industrial technology. We might know the principle behind the steam engine, but it requires mass production of highly accurate parts. It is the same for the new rifles and ammunition. This is the difference because of the use of machines.”

Belgaria could only rely on professional blacksmiths to cast highly accurate pieces of metal. But the High Britannians could mass produce them in factories by using machines.

“Using machines to make machines?”

“Yes. The Belgaria Empire also has a factory right? But the scale isn’t as large as the High Britanian ones.”

“I have never seen a factory. The smithing house I visited earlier was the first time I have seen one too.”

“I see, how unexpected.”

“It can’t be helped, I only came out from the courts one year ago to see the outside world freely.”

“... Well, if you read more books, you would at least know such common sense.”

“Eh?! Because I am always practising my swordsmanship! If it is about swordsmanship, I will know a lot!”

“Well, that’s the style of the Belgarians, it’s a factory made for elite soldiers. This is why we are being chased by a steam ship right now. Is this answer satisfactory?”

“Hmmm…”

Altina frowned as if she had eaten something bitter.

Regis shifted his gaze back to the window.

To the right was land.

It was a forested cape.

There is the danger of going aground if we get too close… But in the eyes of the enemy, we are being chased and only came here because we had no other choice. That’s the battle plan.

Behind us were three other Athena class warships. They were more or less damaged because of the battle earlier.

With smoke rising from their chimney, the enemy ships slowly gained on the Imperials. For them, the imperials were to diagonally to their left— to the northeast of the imperials.

As the High Britannian had the speed advantage and wasn’t that close to the cape, they made a beeline for the Imperials.

“Well, even though we lose out to the enemy in both speed and firing range, we have no intention of giving up. We are almost at the designated area.”

At the exit of Épée Prière Bay, the figure of the Ouranos, which were the fastest ships in the fleet, appeared.

They were less than half the length of the Athena class.

They couldn’t be counted on to match the Princess class in a straight up cannon fight.

The Fleet Admiral of the High Britannians, Oxford maintained the formation of his fleet. To him, these warships weren’t even a threat.

They were just meaningless reinforcements.

However, these Ouranos class ships were a key part of Regis’ plans. The key to start the prologue of counterattacks.

As planned, the flagship Frantam sent out signals with flags. The Ouranos that received the orders took on the mission to support the Imperials.

The sound of cannons rang out, shaking the trees in the cape.

The sound didn’t come from the four Athena class that were being chased, or the six Princess class that were chasing them.

It came from the other side of the cape.

Not just the sound of cannons, black spots also covered the sky.

Those were cannon balls.

The enemy fleet tried to turn away from the cape in a panic… but it was too late.

All 37 support vessels of the Western Liberation fleet fired in unison.

The tight group of cannons rained down, throwing up large ripples on the surface of the ocean, and seemed to engulf the enemy fleet.

The 2nd ship, and even the 3rd ship of the enemy were caught in the fire.

No matter how tough the armour of the Princess class was, it would still shatter after getting pelted with so many shots.

“Amazing! It worked!”

Altina yelled and pressed her face onto the window.

Even though Regis devised the plan himself, he was shocked by the destructive power. A normal ship would have been blown into bits.

However, in the middle of the rain like attack— the figures of two ships appeared. The body was tilting heavily, but it was still afloat.

Regis gasped.

“It…. didn’t sink?!”

Even so, it would only be a matter of time. Its mast was broken and the sails were burning. The chimney was smashed and even the sturdy armour was in pieces with fire coming out from everywhere.

“Ah, Regis! The waves are coming!”

The waves caused by a large number of cannon fire rushed their way.

The flagship Frantam and the other allied ships of the Empire

all turned their rudder inside the moment the cannons fired—However, some allied ships turned too slow.

Of the four ships that were sailing near the cape, the last one in formation was pushed towards land by the waves.

A loud sound could be heard and the ship tilted. The warship seemed to be trapped and couldn’t move.

“Eh? What happened?!”

“… It’s a reef.”

The other warships avoided being washed onto the reef, but they couldn’t keep steady no matter how hard the helmsman steered.

The waves bounced back after hitting the land, and pushed the ships out into the bay.

They didn’t want to be near the enemy ships, but it couldn’t be helped as the steering wheel couldn’t hold the course. They were like leaves being swallowed by a torrent.

Even Altina had to grab onto the desk. Regis was thrown from the chair onto the bed.

“Wahhh…?!”

“Ugh! R-Regis, are you okay?!”

“Ahh… I’m a little…”

Since he was on the bed, he was lying down. But in a sense, it was a safe place.

Next, we just need to wait for the sea to calm down, then escape out of the bay— he thought.

The cannons sounded again.

Altina who was barely standing looked out the window.

“They opened fire.”

“Wha…?!”

On this vast ocean, they should still be quite some distance away. It was hard to imagine them firing it at this juncture.

And most of the cannon shots missed.

But the next moment, a loud destructive noise pierced Regis’ ears.

The flagship Frantam jumped.

— Did we get hit?!

Both Regis and Altina who was grabbing onto the desk were thrown onto the floor from the impact.

How badly are we hit?

He heard the sound of groans coming from the outside.

As expected, they were hit.

The ship was shaking violently, and Regis couldn’t even stand steadily.

But he couldn’t stay in this cabin any longer.

Regis lay prone on the floor and crawled outside.

Altina yelled:

“Where are you going?!”

“To take a look! You stay here!”

“What are you saying!? I’m going too!”

“Don’t be ridiculous!”

After crawling to the door, Regis stood up like a toddler and grabbed the door handle.

Another impact.

Like a tortoise hit in the belly, Regis rolled back in.

“Wahh!”

“What are you doing! Hold on tight!”

His back was supported.

Altina stood on her feet steadily despite all that shaking, just like the desk that was nailed down to the floor.

Regis was dumbfounded when he saw that.

“… Altina… You are actually very heavy right?”

“You want to be thrown overboard?”

“S-Sorry.”

“It’s not about the legs. At a time like this, you have to use your abdominal muscles! Alright, stand steady. We are going outside to take a look!”

Altina turned the doorknob.

And they were greeted by the howling wind.

Part of the wall in the conference room was damaged.

“It’s that bad…”

Regis groaned.

Was the front of the quarter deck hit?! That place holds the steering wheel and the captain’s seat. For a flagship, the seats for the Fleet Admiral and adjutant would be there too.

Altina pulled Regis who stood stiffly from the shock and walked towards the door of the half destroyed conference room.

“… It’s true…. This place was hit.”

The place Regis and Altina were just in was now in tatters. Part of the warship was shattered, and fire had broken out.

The sailors were working hard to extinguish the flames.

The Fleet Admiral was down on the deck.

The adjutant held onto the Fleet Admiral and shouted:

“Admiral Bertram! Admiral Bertram! Pull yourself together!”

Regis rushed to the Fleet Admiral’s side.

Altina who was besides him gasped when she saw the state the Fleet Admiral was in. There was blood everywhere on his head.

The only first aid the sailors could provide on a ship was to bandage his head.

In a voice that was on the verge of tears, the adjutant said:

“Wooo…. When we were hit, in order to protect me, the Fleet Admiral he…”

“His head was hit by shrapnels?”

It was really bad luck.

In such a wide ocean, no matter how advanced the enemy ships might be, their attack shouldn’t land so easily. To think that they were able to hit the heart of the fleet.

The Fleet Admiral lying on the deck opened his eyes gradually.

“Ugh…”

“A-Admiral!”

The adjutant said in tears.

After seeing Regis, Bertram’s mouth broke into a sneer..

“… Arrr… Her Highness?”

“I’m fine!”

Altina answered the Fleet Admiral from Regis’ side.

“That’s great…”

“Admiral, we will treat your wounds right now!”

As if he was ignoring the words of the adjutant, Bertram turned his eyes on Regis.

“... I leave... the command to you...”

“Ehh?! You are talking about me?! Did you mistake me for someone...”

“Please... Mr Strategist... Save... the fleet and the Empire...”

After saying that, the Fleet Admiral lost conscious again.

A middle aged ship’s doctor finally ran over at this point.

“Bring the Fleet Admiral to the conference room now! Bring me some hot water! We can’t let the Admiral die! Hurry!”

He roared his orders and the green faced sailors finally moved in a panic, and the Adjutant collapsed onto the floor in tears.

“Wooo...”

“Now is not the time to cry!”

Altina shouted.

She pointed to the adjutant who raised his head in surprise.

“We are continuing the fight! Aren’t you the adjutant?! The one closest to the Admiral?!”

“Y-Yes…”

“Then, if the Fleet Admiral can’t command any more, what will happen if you can’t command too?! You want to be attacked by the enemy?! Then you can’t save the people you want to save!”

“Ugh… But… Y-Yes!”

He staggered up and forced himself to salute.

He then faced Regis.

And wiped his red eyes.

“Mr Strategist! No, Acting Fleet Admiral Regis d’Auric! The battle earlier was splendid! We couldn’t sink the Princess class no matter the price we paid. And now we sunk two of them!”

“Ah, ahhh…”

“The Admiral entrusted command to you because he admired your talent!”

“Wait… You really want me to be the Acting Fleet Admiral? I don’t know if I can…”

“Now isn’t the time to say such depressed words, Regis! The enemy is coming!”

The enemy fleet that suffered a heavy blow started to straighten their formation— they were closing in from the left.

The enemy was just one ship.

As expected, the 2nd and 3rd ship couldn’t fight anymore, even though it was still floating. If they didn’t put out the fire, it would sink eventually.

As for the three other warships, one was chasing the flagship to support it. The other two weren’t planning to link up with the flagship, drifting away to the cape to reorganize themselves.

The Imperial side still had three Athena class ships.

As the bridge of the Frantam was struck, the command system fell into chaos.

What Regis needed to do wasn’t just a competition for one person, but a command that will decide the fate of 2000 sailors.

Now wasn’t the time to discuss about his lack of confidence or suitability.

“Hah… No choice… Although I am not confident in commanding… Erm… Stay on course and head for the bay.”

“Understood!”

The adjutant relayed the orders while the First Lieutenant manned the helm personally in place of the injured captain and helmsman.
<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_lieutenant#Royal_Navy>

Altina asked:

“If we go ahead like this, wouldn’t we be attacked?”

“Yes, we will.”

Right now, the allied ships should be within range of the leading Princess class warship.

I thought they would return to the harbour.

Or rather, they are filled with fighting spirit after we sank their ships.

Regis felt he had miscalculated.

“… Did I misjudge… I thought the enemy Fleet Admiral Oxford

was someone who preferred to follow the books. That’s why I adopted this plan in response… However, after losing two ships from a surprise attack that came from the other side of the cape, and with the ships being unable to move steadily in the ragged waves, he still continued his pursuit… He is an exceptional ship captain.”

Even though the front of the quarter deck being hit by enemy fire was just an unlucky occurrence.

The enemies’ fighting spirit was clear.

It wouldn’t be surprising if they fired again at any time.

“We can’t escape?”

“… Well… It seems like they won’t let us escape so easily… Time to dazzle their eyes.”

“Dazzle their eyes?”

Intriguingly, Altina opened her eyes wide.

The adjutant awaited the next orders.

“Erm… Send an order to the support team on the other side. ‘It’s fine even if it doesn’t hit, fire at the enemy ships with your maximum range’… We will be firing in concert as well… After this, we will let that ship debut as planned.”

The flagship Frantam sent out orders with flags once again.

The flags signalled synchronized with the command sent from the crow’s nest of the ships to the deck. The only addition was the order to open fire.

A moment later, sound of cannons came from the other side of the cape.

Following Frantam’s lead, the three allied ships also opened fire.

Large amount of cannon fire fell before the enemy ships, making a huge splash— or rather, it was a wall of water.

The sea started raging again.

Regis grabbed on to the railing for dear life.

Regis had never read about a Fleet Admiral as embarrassing as he was. Once again, he felt he was not suitable to be the Acting Fleet Admiral.

“Ugghhh…”

The shaking was intense, but Altina was still standing steadily.

“Why did you ask the support ships to fire? The enemy isn’t in range yet.”

“… The enemy doesn’t know about what kind of ships are behind the cape. They will become wary and think ‘maybe they have cannons with enough range to reach here’, right? The next shots should be coming soon.”

“You mean the shots flying towards those ships?”

“Yes.”

And it almost hit the warships.

The enemy ships didn’t open fire yet. This distance was too far even for the Type 41 Elswick guns. Even more so for the Empire’s guns.

“That might be so, but it’s enough to dazzle their eyes. And in such rolling waves, the enemy would find it harder to aim.”

But even so, there was still the chance of them being hit……

Regis glanced at the front of the quarter deck that was burned and shivered.

He recalled the appearance of the injured Fleet Admiral.

The next one to fall might be himself— But it was fine if that happened. It wouldn’t be surprising if a useless admin officer like him lost his life on the battlefield.

However, he had to do his best to keep Altina from getting injured.

The continuous cannon fire could only achieve the effect of stalling for time.

The wind got stronger.

They were really close to the bay exit.

If they get hit even once after wandering into the enemies' range, the Ouranos would be seriously damaged, so they began to withdraw. The small crafts that retrieved the sailors from the Athena class that was sunk had also dispersed.

As if it was a replacement for all of that, a large battleship appeared from the tip of the cape.

One of the sailors shouted:

"Poseidon class battleship!"

The strongest battleship of Belgaria and the pride of its navy — the 120 gun armoured Poseidon class battleship.

The body of the ship was covered in armour like a knight in full plate. On the side of the ship were more cannons than that of the Athena class.

Numerous gun ports opened and aimed at the entrance of

the bay.

The superiority of the armour and firepower of the Poseidon class was obvious, but it was much weaker than the Princess class in terms of range and speed.

And that giant battleship was charging into the bay by itself. If it approached the harbour like this, the High Britannian supply ships would be pulverized in an instant.

If a Poseidon got in close, even the Princess class battleship wouldn’t be able to withstand it.

The flagship of the enemy slowed down its speed.

The other warships reacted slower and prepared to change course to engage the Poseidon in battle.

If they approached the cape again, they would probably be attacked by the support ships. The opponents knew this, so they changed directions and prepared for the attack.

Using this chance, the flagship Regis was on escaped out of the bay with the other two allied ships.

Altina leaned her body out of the starboard.

“We can win with just one ship?!”

“No way, we can’t win even if it is one on one… The enemy just needs to keep attacking from range, and our ship will explode once they hit the gunpowder.”

Belgaria built a heavily armoured battleship at the expense of range.

To be more detailed, it was a short ranged and slow battleship.

Regis who was next to Altina, rested his elbows on the handrail.

Our losses are three Athena class battleship, injury to the Fleet Admiral and the sacrifice of the Poseidon class. The enemy lost two Princess class battleships. These results…”

“Eh?! That big ship sacrificed itself in order to let us escape?!”

Actually, even if we escaped out of the bay, that slow battleship wouldn’t be able to escape. We have removed the men, gunpowder and equipment from it, fixing the rudder in place and letting it charge straight ahead. Even if we allowed such a battleship that is behind the times to be sunk, we can’t ignore the lives of the 800 sailors on board.”

The overly reputed battleship was a burden to its allies instead of a bane to the enemy. This might be hard for others to accept but— Regis thought that instead of the enemy vessels, this heavy and slow giant ship was responsible for more deaths of the Empire’s sailors.

That’s why he came up with the unmanned ship attack plan. On the surface, this was for the sake of ‘supporting the retreat of our fleet’.

The enemy fleet who didn’t know the truth kept their distance cautiously and fired from a distance.

There wasn’t any gunpowder for the cannons, so it wouldn’t explode.

Despite suffering uncountable amount of cannon fire, the

Poseidon class battleship still remained afloat.

But even if the ship was covered in heavy armour, the weakness of sail ships were its sails.

The sail that was harnessing the wind was hit by cannon fire and started burning.

The battleship eventually stopped.

And started drifting with the waves.

Due to the direct hit from the cannons, a hole was opened near the bottom of the ship, and seawater seeped in.

All large ships including war vessels pumped out water by using manpower.

With no one on the ship, the pump wouldn’t move.

The ship gradually tilted towards the port side where it was flooded and it gradually sunk.

Regis watched the warship until it sunk completely.

“The flagship is ship number one… The ships sunk by the support fleet are ship four and ship five… After the attack, the one that followed the flagship closely was ship five… The ones controlling the harbour region were eight and nine.”

“What are you talking about?”

“… For navy fleets, orders are basically conveyed through flags. But if they waited for orders, they might not be able to keep up with the development of the battle. And in a cannon battle, they might not be able to see the flags clearly because of the smoke from the cannons. And so, the personality of the captains are important in a battle.”

“Their tendency in a fight?”

“… How they would react in an emergency… Something like that.”

“You understand them now?”

“… I misjudged the personality of the Fleet Admiral just now. It was dangerous to make a decision like that, but I still did. I

understand some of the things.”

Regis asked the adjutant standing at on top of the quarter deck.

“You marked the spot?”

“Yes Sir!”

Altina looked puzzled again.

Regis shrugged.

“… You attended the war council too.”

“… But, when Regis was discussing tactics with the navy officers, you kept using terms I didn’t understand.”

“… If you didn’t understand, why didn’t you ask?”

“That’s too embarrassing. Others will tease me and say ‘how is it possible for you to be a commander if you don’t even understand these’.”

“I see… Well, I have a good book for you. <Sailor’s Rule>, written by a certain Fleet Admiral a hundred or so years ago. It list down the basic terminology of the navy and fundamental fleet tactics. It will be useful for you.”

“Hmm… Erm… How thick is it?”

“Thickness? About this thick.”

Regis who was never concerned about the pages in a book thought about it for a moment, and gestured the thickness of the book.

It was clear what Altina was thinking from her face.

“I have to read such a thick book?”

“Hmmm, but it will be thin if you go by volumes.”

“Erm… How many volumes are there?”

“For just the fundamentals, just five volumes would be enough? Well, the part I like is in volume eight. The literary style is a bit old, but compared to High Britannian and

Hispanian where I have to refer to a dictionary to translate while reading, it was great. There aren’t many books about the navy, so this book is valuable. I wasn’t allowed to loan it out when I read it in the Military Library, but maybe it will be fine if you borrowed it?”

“Ahhh, yes… it’s close to my house anyway.”

If it is swordsmanship or horsemanship practice, Altina will be eager to start even in the middle of the night. But for the sake of the future, she should put more effort on her studies.

Regis shrugged.

The adjutant walked down from the quarter deck.

“I have confirmed the spot where it was sunk.”

“Yes… Let’s sail for the 3rd rendezvous point. They won’t pursue us even if we withdraw like this. Also… How about leaving half of the small crafts around the bay for reconnaissance? They just need to do so until we begin attacking tomorrow, it’s fine if anyone is afraid and wants to run away. Just watch the enemy movement as much as possible.”

“Understood!”

The adjutant saluted.

And introduced himself again.

“I am the adjutant of Fleet Admiral Bertram, Third Grade Combat Officer Spark. Acting as Fleet Admiral Regis’ adjutant for now.”

“… Erm, the commander of the western forces is the princess.”

“I understand. But the Acting Fleet Admiral is the only one with command authority over the fleet.”

Altina nodded.

“Yes! I accept Regis appointment as Acting Fleet Admiral! I have the authority to appoint you, right?!”

“Ugh…”

Even though she hated studying, Altina remember everything Regis said very clearly. She could even stump him at times.

Acting Fleet Admiral huh.

It was an emergency earlier so he didn’t protest, but he needed to continue with his command now. There was no telling when the next battle will start… After learning that he will be in command henceforth, he couldn’t suppress the unease in his heart.

“Erm… I did say that… The upcoming operation might be rather dangerous, we have steeled ourselves that some of our men might die…”

“You are the man Bertram entrusted command with, please don’t belittle yourself.”

“… Confidence huh… That might be hard.”

Regis kept sighing to himself.

The First Lieutenant of the flagship Frantam asked:

“Pardon me for interrupting! I have a suggestion, can we change the flagship to the 4th vessel Brouillard?”

“… Is the damage to this ship that bad?”

“Frantam took several hits in the battle earlier, the deck is slanting. The quarterdeck, bow and sides of the ship have quite a few holes.”

“… I see… I will respect the decision of the battleship captain then.”

“Thank you very much!”

After saluting, he went off to perform his duties. The adjutant also left to command the reconnaissance task of the small crafts.

Altina shifted her gaze to a battleship that was approaching gradually.

“We are going to board that battleship now?”

“… Yes, we have to shift. After all, we will need to prepare for

the next battle immediately. I am not confident… But I will still do it properly.”

“Defeat all the enemies!”

“Wrong.”

“Eh?”

“… No matter what, a fleet that loses out in range and speed would only be pummeled one sidedly. We need to get our hands on the combat power to hold our own against them.”

“We are making a steamship?”

“… We don’t have the time. At the pace the Empire is progressing, it would probably take fifty years. There is an easy way right now, which is to borrow it from the enemy, right?”

“Eh?! Will they agree to that?”

“… That’s true, they wouldn’t.”

Vessel one Frantam couldn’t sail fast because of damage to its sails, so Regis and the others transferred to vessel four Brouillard.

Fleet Admiral Bertram was still unconscious, resting on the bed in his room. The rest would be up to the ship doctor.

The only thing Regis, who was entrusted with a heavy role, could do was to bring him news of victory when he wakes up. And that was to reclaim Chainboule city, stop the invasion of the High Britannians and protect the Belgarian Empire.

Altina cast her gaze to the east.

It wasn’t too far from land right now, what she saw at the end wasn’t the horizon, but the coast of the Belgarian Empire.

“Will Latreille be fine?”

“… If it is him, he won’t be defeated that easily. However, his opponent, Commander Oswald is not a simple character.”

“That commander feels scary… And not just that, it might sound weird but… It feels like walking in the night without

any street lamps…”

“The Empire is always at war. It would be strange if we forget about fear.”

“That’s true… Probably.”

Altina seemed hesitant to speak.

“… No one can tell what the future holds.”

“Even Regis?”

“… What I do know are the things I read from books.”

Chaineboule City
High Brittania
Poseidon
Support
Trouin Region
Empire
Wind

Footnote by fans

Class one vessel— three decks, 106 or 122 guns, manned by more than 875 people, water displacement 2500-3500 tons. The signature ship is the ‘Victory’, flagship of Admiral Nelson that participated in the naval battle of Trafalgar.

Class two vessel— three decks, 98 guns, manned by around 750 people, water displacement above 2000 tons.

Class three vessel— two or three decks 64, 74 or 80 guns, manned by 490-720 people, water displacement 1300-2000 tons. The most common capital ships in the British Empire.

Class four vessel— two decks, 50 guns, manned by around 350 people, water displacement above 1000 tons.

The above four classes of vessels are called battleships. Vessels smaller than this were categorized into Frigates, Corvette and Sloop.

Chapter 4 - Battle of Épée Prière Bay

Chaineboule’s Harbour——

The High Britania’s ‘Queen’s Navy’, ninth vessel Garnet, a class three Princess Class high speed steam warship.

On the Princess Class warship, in place of where the third mast should be, was a smokestack so tall that the sailors didn’t seem to be able to use it to expel smoke.

Ship No. 1 only had one smokestack while ships that were built after Ship No. 6 had two. Though this would vary depending on the size of the hull, the sails and the position of the gun deck.

That being said, they were fundamentally the same.

The ship was 120 Co (53m) long and 34 Co (15m) wide. When the steam engine was switched on, the sails would be kept. Out of the three masts, the middle mast which was 130 Co (58m) in height was the tallest.

While they could control the numerous cannons, the cannons’ position was not much higher than the waterline.

Belgaria’s Athena class battleship was tall and looked like a

fortress floating on the ocean. The ship was also beautified and majestic.

Conversely, High Britannia’s Princess Class battleship was rather short, giving it a simplistic feel. This was likely to lower the chances of getting hit——

Though when the ship was at sea, water could easily enter the third deck which happened to be the gun deck. At that point, the gunners had to clear the seawater out with buckets.

As the boat was loaded with coal, the waterline was higher than expected.

Compared to other countries’ ships, the steam battleships were superior, though they were not completely flawless.

There were many practical problems since this was High Britannia’s first time installing a steam engine on a big ship.

Princess Class battleship’s quarterdeck had a low ceiling. Five floors below the deck, there was a small door behind the ladder. The size fitted children better than adults, though they had to deal with it as the ship was constructed this way to add in armour.

After opening the door, there was another flight of stairs leading downwards. After that, the space became wider and ahead of it was the bridge.

In the middle of the room was a steering wheel.

There was also a steering wheel on top of the quarterdeck with a clear view of the sea. Normally, one would direct the ship from above with broad vision, especially in times when they required precise movement as to link up with their allies.

On the other hand, this steering wheel was used during battle. With the quarterdeck above it, they could continue their work even if they were hit by cannonballs.

Further in would be the Captain’s room.

The door here was large, unlike the door earlier that was small.

Inside the room——

There was a girl in sailor uniform who had a sweet smile.

“Ara, thank you for your hard work, Captain Molins”

It was a blonde-haired, blue eyes girl. She looked around nineteen year old.

Her beautiful hair that could reach her waist was tied up behind her nape. Her skirt was laced while her top was fastened with a belt. As she was not that tall, it looked like she was wearing a dress, though she was actually wearing

pants.

She was Lorraine, the captain’s aide.

While it might be rare in other countries, High Britannia had female soldiers. After all, it was a country that was ruled by a queen, so there were no strong patriarchal thoughts.

“Captain Molins, is the conference over?”

“You can understand from just hearing it, my stomach’s growling already.”

“Really?! Lunch was sent back already…”

“Everyone is consoling MacCunn who was dispirited as his son was on Ship No.6.”

MacCunn was the captain of Ship No. 1. As he believed that being overprotective would bring a negative effect on his son, he did not put his son on his ship. Now, it was too late to regret about that.

“That, I can only say that he was just unlucky.”

“That’s right. After receiving such a surprise attack, he probably didn't even have the time to jump into the sea.”

“Don’t even have time to eat lunch.”

“Are you referring to me? Well, it’s not right to go on with an empty stomach.”

“Do you want to some red tea? There are biscuits too.”

“I would prefer jam.”

The captain of Garnet, Huey Molins, blinked his eyes and leaned against the chair.

The captain’s living quarters was not only a conference room, but also acted as a canteen for non-commissioned officers to have their meal, exchanging strategies, a tea break, a tea break or a tea break.

Citizens of High Britannia loved to drink tea.

Lorraine boiled a pot of water.

She weighed out some tea leaves and poured them into the pot.

The slight fragrance of the tea caused Molins to relax. After recovering from the previous tense state, he started to complain.

“The admiral believes that the Belgaria Army will attack once more.”

“Huhu… … If they dare to come, will we strike back? As long

we are not close to that cape, we won’t be attacked like today.”

“That’s right.”

“Here’s your tea, captain.”

The red tea that was placed on the table had steam coming out of it.

Molins picked the cup up and placed it near his mouth.

The sharp fragrance of the tea dispelled his sleepiness while the sweet taste healed his fatigued body.

“Hmmm… The tea brewed by you is delicious as always. Now I don’t feel like going back home.”

“What are you saying, Madam would be angry.”

“Ah, my head hurts once marriage is mentioned. I didn’t want to be an adopted son-in-law.”
<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mukoy%C5%8Dshi >

“Is it really fine to tell me about this?”

“Guess you’re right.”

“I heard that your father is an Admiral of the Fleet, correct?”

“I used to be conceited, wanting to be a battleship captain. I didn’t want to command those small supply ships, big ships were more suitable for me… … Then, my wife was introduced to me at a party and she loves me from her bottom of her heart. Well, partly because I’m handsome. After marrying her, I became the captain of this new battleship via my father-in-law’s recommendation and things became successful for me. A bright and sunny future awaited me.”

“Are you using past tense?”

“However, women will change after having a child.”

“I can’t relate to since I never had a child… …”

“Do you want one?”

“Are you some old man?”

“Don’t I look manly?”

“I prefer gentleman-type.”

“Things like being a gentleman, you’ll know it once you’re on the bed.”

His stretched his hand and caught Lorraine’s scarf.

And pull her red lips towards him.

Her blue eyes kept looking at this direction.

“It’s still daytime, captain… … What about the conference?”

“Don’t be bothered about it. If it’s about the Belgaria Army, they would only be able to attack tomorrow morning earliest. And about the conference, the Gorilla’s strategies are the same as those of the textbook.”

“As this bothers me very much, so let me confirm. The Gorilla refers to the admiral?”

“What, could it be that you like those wild type? You’re not interested on those who are not boorish? If that’s the case, I could satisfy you too.”

“That isn’t it… … Gorilla as the admiral’s nickname… … Fufufu…”

Gradually, there was no conversation between them.

There was only some wet sound.

Some kind of sticky sound, produced by the tip of their tongues intertwining between their lips.

Slurp… … They separated.

Lorraine’s eyes were unfocused and she was blushing.

“You’re always like this… … So forceful.”

“Forget about that admiral. I already forgot about him.”

“He’s just behind you though?”

“Are you kidding me?!”

Molins turned his head back in a panic.

A hairy hand grabbed Molins’ head.

A creaking sound could be heard.

It looked as painful as getting cut.

The owner of the hand had red hair that looked like mowed grass and on his head was an admiral hat. His amber eyes were looking over here. Despite wearing the military uniform, one could clearly see his muscles all over his body.

He was the admiral of High Britannia’s <Queen’s Navy>—— Vice-admiral Goliath Oxford

Exactly how did this giant pass through the small door?

“Ah—— Ah—— Can you hear me, Captain Molins?”

“Yes! Yes!”

“You suspended the conference earlier due to some urgent stuff. Have you finished your business, Captain Molins?”

“Yes! Yes!”

“Do you want to continue the conference?”

“That’s a yes for sure, admiral! For the sake of my beloved country, crews and family, even if have to give my life, I’ll fight til the end! Did the admiral hear the jokes I made?”

“Gorilla?”

“I’m an ape! Ahh!! Rather than those jokes, the Belgaria Army are still here, admiral! They will surely attack us tomorrow morning! So this isn’t the time to be bothered about those jokes! They are just jokes!”

“What evidence do you have that the enemy will attack us tomorrow morning?”

“The wind blows from the sea to the coastal area at daytime. This would be the optimal time to attack us when the wind is not in our favour. Clearly their target is the supply ships. It takes about two to three days for us to unload those supplies. So tomorrow would be their last day staying in the port. Once those supply ships sail out, coupled with our fierce attack, it will be hard for the enemy to find out the actual supply route.”

“What about counter-measures?”

“Our fleet has four Princess Class battleships. We can station one of them outside the cape to ambush them. Once the enemy pass through the cape, we will let that battleship block the route they use and strike at them using a pincer attack. While the Empire has lots of battleships, most of them are fourth class, so they can’t be effectively count as firepower. From the battle earlier, we found out that the enemy’s main fleet does not have durable armour. It would be easy for us to decimate them once we block off their escape route.”

“How are we going to hide our battleship?”

“The Empire’s fleet came from northwest direction. It will be fine if we station our ship slightly further in the southwest.”

“Oh?”

“Ah, the reason why I guessed they came from the northwest is because the wind at the Trouin Sea is blowing at the southwest direction at this timing. Normally, any sailboat will choose to attack from the southwest. However, a commander choosing to attack from the southwest in an orthodox manner would not be able to pull off a surprise attack like today.”

“So it’s the commander’s personality… …”

“Belgaria fleet commander is vice-admiral Bertram. He is

someone who prefers to use orthodox methods. I believe the commander this time is someone else who came after their defeat at the battle of Trouin.”

“Hm, that’s possible. How does everyone else feel?”

The admiral finally released his hand which was grabbing onto Molins’ head. As his head was grabbed with a large amount of force, it still hurt even after being released.

Molins rubbed his head while shedding tears.

He did not notice that the other captains had already gathered at the mess hall due to the conversation earlier.

This bunch of people… How dare they enter other people’s ship without asking for permission—— Molins thought so without daring to say it out loud.

Lorraine adjusted her scarf and moved further away from the table.

She went to brew tea.

Seawater is enough for them! Molins thought so but he still swept away the dust on the table.

“Please take a seat. Welcome to the Garnet.”

“Really, you’re still such a smoothtalker.”

The captain of Ship No. 1, MacCunn, was a middle age man. A black cloth was tied at his arm, most likely for mourning.

His eyes were red. Even though he just lost his son, he was a man who was committed to his work. As such, he was dissatisfied with Molins' frivolous attitude.

The captain of Ship No. 5, Ballista, was an energetic youth. He was born in a noble family and was very prideful. He preferred to use aggressive strategies, which resulted in him gaining some achievements.

Be it the battle of Trouin from before or today's battle at Épée Prière Bay, he was the first one in the fleet to attack the enemy.

"I don't need red tea. That reminds me, while this strategy is not bad, I do not like it since it came from Molins."

Do you think I like you?!

While Molins wanted to shout it out, he still tolerated it since the other party was a youth.

The Captain of vessel number eight, Olsen, was the only captain who was older than the Fleet Admiral. He was a rare sight, from an accountancy background. He even worked as a palace chef before that.

The old-style battleship he was on before was decommissioned. Just when he thought of retiring at the same time, he was recommended by the previous queen, Queen Charlotte, and thus became the captain of a Princess Class battleship.

“Our priority is to protect the supplies that are meant to be sent to the frontline… … That is why we took up the role of protecting the supply ships and the harbour… … Aren’t we getting our priority backwards if we just think about attacking the enemy? I do not agree with this strategy even if there’s only one ship sent out for ambushing them.”

The old captain spoke words of caution.

Molins lowered his head in resignation.

“My apologies! Everyone is right! I failed to consider the big picture.”

In actuality, Molins didn’t care about the strategies.

He just wanted to muddle past the thing about him avoiding the conference.

The gorilla——No, Admiral Oxford was considering his options.

It seemed that a decision was made.

“Hmm, while Captain Molins’ idea is unique, we should prioritise our strategy in protecting the supply ships.”

I knew this would happen.

Is such a passive strategy really fine? Despite what Molins thought, he still smiled and listen silently.

The admiral continued:

“However, I still agree with his conjecture that the enemy would attack tomorrow morning. We have to increase our security. I’ll leave this responsibility to captain Ballista.”

“Aye aye, admiral. If you leave it to me, not even a fish will escape from my watch.”

“We have to finish unloading by tomorrow and leave the port the day after. We have to hurry up if we want to finish this within the scheduled time. I’ll leave this to captain Olsen.”

“Aye aye, Sir. I’ll try my best to hasten the progress. I’ll just throw those supplies that we couldn’t unload in time into the sea.”

“Hm. Ship No.1 to Ship No. 9, remain on standby. Do not let the fire in the steam engine go out even during the night.”

“Aye aye, Admiral!”

MacCunn saluted.

Naturally, Molins also saluted.

Lorraine brought the tea over for everyone.

“Please have some Syrian Tea.”

Oi oi, don’t serve such high quality tea to them. Dish water is enough for them—— Molins was complaining in his heart.

Admiral Oxford saluted solemnly and spoke.

“My apologies, but I have to excuse myself as I have matters of grave national importance to attend to..”

After saying so, he left the officer’s mess just like this.

The other captains also returned to their own ships.

It was finally peaceful once more.

There were five cups of tea on the table.

Molins who was still in the room leaned against the chair once more and picked one of the cup up.

“Haa, they sure are busy enough that they do not even have the time to drink a cup of tea, isn’t that right?”

“Is this really fine? After all, we are in a crucial moment.”

“Even though they think that the enemy will be coming tomorrow morning, we still have to be on standby. In the end, we don’t even have the time to land.”

“Since it’s just til tomorrow morning, just bear with it for now… …”

“Is that so? How about we continue til morning since we can’t alight the ship anyway?”

“Looks like you have yet to learn your lesson… …”

“Life would be too brief if we have to rein ourselves in all the time like some saint. Don’t you also prefer to spend your time meaningfully, rather than being bored while drinking tasteless tea?”

“Didn’t the navy’s rules state that while being on standby, we need to be able to carry out the orders of the flagship at any moment.?”

“That rule does exist. Though I had already prepared everything. What comes next is to wait for your signal?”

“Even though you do not intend to wait… … Always… …”

“It’s just that you didn’t notice it, but I have already sent a signal long ago.”

He stretched his hand out and lewdly wiggled his fingers.

==========

Tonight would be busier than the battle that happened this morning.

Regis was working around the clock

In order to avoid the enemy’s surveillance, Regis sat on a wooden raft that was even smaller than a fishing boat and slowly moved towards cape.

Under the guise of darkness and sounds of wave, Regis gave details instructions to the sailors.

Making full use of the sailors’ skill, Regis conducted some work on the Poseidon class ship that sunk.

The sea at night was cold even if it was June right now and there were High Britannia surveillance boats around, so they did not have the time to work leisurely. Swimming towards the precise position of a sunken ship during night time was not an easy feat.

Starting from two spots that were near the cape, the sailors tied a black rope around them and jumped into the sea.

The area where the two ropes intercept was likely to be

position of the sunken Poseidon class ship.

The longer the rope, the heavier it became. Many sailors needed to work together to pull it taut.

While this was suggested by Regis, it was not a totally new idea. This was usually used when making a map.

“You sure are smart, to realise something that most wouldn’t… “

“… I just happened to read about it before.”

Regis who was praised for using this method said humbly while waving his hands.

A really capable strategist would be able to prevent casualties on their side and able to finish off the enemy’s ships without the sailors needing to swim at night. This kind of magic-like strategy was something Regis could not do nor could he even imagine it.

This was why Regis felt like he was not competent and did not deserve their praise.

At the very least, I have to fulfill my role—— Regis thought as he fought off the urge to sleep while listening to the reports and gave out orders.

While this kind of battle was written in the book, it was not an orthodox strategy. Just simply giving out instructions would

not work, which was why Regis came along personally. There was no one capable enough that Regis could entrust the job with.

The worse thing was that Regis couldn’t swim, but that couldn’t be helped.

Even if they were near the cape, there were still waves and the vision was not that good.

If Regis, who could not swim, was to go into the sea, they would need to prepare for a drowning accident before preparing for the actual battle.

Regis suppressed that idea as the sailors repeatedly told him ‘don’t ever fall into the sea’.

The water in the bay was not that deep, which was why the sunken boat was quite near the water surface.

What the sailors had to do was not complicated at all as the equipment that was required was placed under the Poseidon class ship’s deck beforehand

After opening the specified box in the sea, a rope was tied to the buoys and sent out. After exiting the cabin, the buoys slowly floated to the top.

Naturally, some of the equipment was damaged during the crossfire.

After which, the buoy was tied with some heavy objects, making it sink down while surrounding the sunken ship.

The sailors did as they were instructed without understanding what was the point of doing so.

When Regis and the sailors finished their job and left the cape, the eastern sky had begun to brighten.

While withdrawing, they were discovered by High Britannia surveillance boats!

Even though their raft was disguised as a fishing boat… ...

The surveillance craft made a show of pursuit, but thought it wasn’t worth the effort — It probably decided that and returned to its original position. The sailors on the raft all sighed in relief and thanked god for watching over them.

As the sky brightened, the mountains at the eastern side were dyed in red.

The third rendezvous point chosen by Regis was a small island located at the northwest of the Épée Prière Bay. Ships that sailed from here would move southeast.

It was like what Narissa said. The wind would blow southwest at this time.

In accord to the wind, the ships began to move into position according to their ship’s height.

Sailing with the wind, the Western Liberation Fleet began moving towards the harbour.

The vanguard consisted of four Athena class battleships.

However, these ships had unloaded provisions, shuttle crafts, gunpowder and excess ammunitions. Even the number of sailors on board was kept to a minimum. It did not even reach three hundred despite usually holding up to five hundred sailors.

To reduce the number of casualties—— That was not the case. The main point of this strategy was speed, so they would do anything to increase their speed even if it was just a bit.

Furthermore, the eight Ouranos class ship which were on standby were added into their formation.

There should be around twenty battleships as admiral Bertram had called in the nearby ships. Though most of these ships were made to maintain order in the sea and losing these ships would result in safety-related problems in the future. Furthermore, they were not effective against Princess Class battleship, which was why these ships were left out of the formation.

The four Athena and eight Ouranos ships were moving in a double column.

The other battleships were stationed behind them with quite a gap in between. Two Athena, fourteen Selene and twelve Ouranos Class ships.

It looked fine for a fleet.

However, losing too many ships in the war would bring lots of trouble to the nation’s coastal security.

Perhaps another harbour would be occupied or merchant ships would be attacked by pirates. In the first place, the empire had lost a fair bit against High Britannia, so they might collapse financially.

This was not as easy as defeating the enemy and retaking the harbour.

Protecting the citizens was the army’s duty.

The empire had already lost if it had to rely on reserves.

Inside the quarterdeck of the Western Liberation Fleet’s new flagship, Brouillard——

While they were still quite a distance away from the bay, Regis returned to the conference room. Rather than for a discussion, he came here as he could not handle how rocky

the ship was.

There was a wide table with chairs around it.

There was only Altina right beside Regis.

She seemed to be quite sleepy as she kept yawning. She was most likely awake waiting for Regis and the rest to return.

Perhaps she might complain that I didn’t tell her before leaving—— Regis thought. Unexpectedly, she did not do so and complimented the sailors who returned instead.

While this might be inappropriate, but I couldn’t but think that Altina is growing...

After wiping the tears away, Altina opened her eyes.

“Hm? Is there something on my face?”

“Ah, there’s nothing… …”

Regis was staring at her unconsciously.

It’s likely that I’m going to get scolded for yesterday night. Though, I didn't really want to do it.

“Well… you’re quite calm…”

“That’s right. After all, what I can do on the sea is limited.”

“That’s the same for everyone. Everyone has their own task after all.”

“Yes, that’s right. Looking at them made me think quite a bit of things too.”

“Like what?”

“Well… … I began to wonder whether it’s right to keep charging ahead in the battlefield.”

Regis widened his eyes.

“Are you having a fever…?”

“That’s rude!”

“Ah, that, my apologies but didn’t you keep ignoring my advice of not charging ahead of your guards? Why did you suddenly changed your mind?”

“Uh, well… … That might be so… … I don’t intend to keep staying at the back? During battles, what’s important is to help our allies and fulfill our roles. The guards have the role of protecting me, don’t they? If I wasto push ahead too much, I would put the guards in danger. Eric’s injury was likely my fault… …”

Altina’s bodyguard, Eric, was injured by the enemy when the

enemy was fighting Altina.

Currently, he was recuperating at Fort Volks. Though he would definitely participate in this expedition if he was not injured.

Even though Altina just celebrated her fifteenth birthday, she suddenly seemed to have grown so much when she began to consider things seriously.

She wanted to be the empress.

To achieve her ambitious goal, it was necessary for her to win in the political struggle. And to achieve that, her growth was indispensable.

Being just honest and kind disqualified her as a ruler, she must be able to think for her citizens.

If Altina obtain such valuable experiences from this battle because she took part in it, that would be wonderful.

Seeing the growth of the young princess, Regis had forgotten about the tension, anxiety and the fatigue he felt.

The door connecting the deck and the conference room opened from the outside.

It was the adjutant, Spark, who came in and saluted.

“Admiral, it’s about time to come up to the deck.”

Regis was the acting-admiral, and would be treated with respect as the figurehead on the battlefield. However, it might delay orders if they kept calling him acting-admiral, which was why the adjutant shortened it to admiral.

Even though they were calling him, Regis thought he wasn’t worthy.

“Alright… Thank you, I’ll be right there.”

“Understood!”

The adjutant left the room first.

Regis followed Altina who stood up and left the quarterdeck.

The wind was blowing.

“It feels rather nice once you get used to the sea wind.”

“You’re right…”

As there was the adjutant beside them when they went out, Regis called Altina as ‘Her Highness’ and spoke formally.

The wind came from the front.

“Sails sure are amazing. How can we still move forward even

though we’re going against the wind?”

“...Actually, no matter the direction of the wind, if you are on a ship moving forward, you will feel the wind blowing at you, right?— No, I mean the breeze seem to be directed at you.” <TL: Latter half is formal speech.>

“Ah, is that so?”

“If Your Highness wishes to know the wind direction, please look at the wind vane at the top of the mast… … Ahh, the wind is blowing at us diagonally”

“Isn’t the wind blowing against us after all?!”

“That… … Did you know, about a century ago, a scholar named Bernoulli wrote a thesis. In the thesis, it was stated that an increase in the speed of a fluid occurs simultaneously with a decrease in pressure?”

“What is the fluid?”

“In this case, it would be the air.”

“Just say it’s the air then! Why do you always use words that are hard to understand?!”

“Ah… That… Even though it’s air, but it’s actually the characteristic of the fluid that’s at work here, so it’s better to call it fluid.”

“Arghh… …”

Altina pouted.

Regis decided to raise the white flag and spoke once more.

“It’s a long story… … First, we have to change the direction the sail is facing. In any case, let’s have the back of the sail face the wind.”

“If the ship is sailing forward, even if the wind is coming from diagonally ahead, you only need to adjust the angle of the sail to catch the wind. The wind will put pressure onto the sail this way. The shape of the ship is important at this point. A ship is narrow in the front and back, but broad at the side. It would be difficult to push the ship sideways. After that, only the forward moving force would be left behind. Since the bow of the ship is narrow, it can advance through the sea easily right? So in the end, even the wind coming diagonally at it could push the ship forward. There is the disadvantage of slight lateral movement though.”

Which was why the boat could sail against the wind—— Even so, if the angle of the wind was less than 45°, the ship would not be able to sail forward. Furthermore, if the sail was directly facing the wind, the sail might break in the worst scenario.

Regis did not know whether Altina understood it or not, but

she had a look of admiration.

“Oh——”

“Well, going against the wind is always dangerous no matter what kind of sailboat it is. Like the retreat yesterday, they almost caught up with us because we were really close to going against the wind.”

“Hmm, so it’s like that.”

“Ships going with the wind would have a more ideal speed. If the sail is big, that’s even more…”

“Ship spotted ahead!”

Hearing the lookout’s voice, Regis looked ahead.

What he saw was a ship.

A small craft.

The crow’s nest gave better vision than on the deck, not to mention that spyglass was used.

Thanks to that, they identified the craft that was spotted as being their own unit that was sent out for scouting. The signal they sent to the flagship could be seen clearly.

The adjutant reported to Regis.

“It’s our own scout. Erm… … its report is ‘No sign of enemy vessels in the vicinity. Coast is clear at the entrance of the bay..”

Regis lowered his head and muttered to himself.

“Looks like the enemy reduced their defense around the bay… … I see, so they decided to do this.”

While adjutant Spark was a little nervous, he still smiled and opened his mouth.

“Looks like the enemy thinks that we will be coming from the southwest. After all, that’s what we did for yesterday since it’s common sense to sail with the wind.”

“Why is that so…? If it’s me, I will consider that there’s a fifty percent chance of them attacking from northwest.”

“Is that so?”

“We have to consider about unexpected strategies that the enemy could use… … Since they don’t have any intention to engage outside the bay, it’s natural that they’re not interested in which direction the enemy might attack.”

“Will the enemy place an ambush outside the cape?”

“That wouldn’t be too big of a problem… But it would be

troublesome for us if they ambushed us with a pincer attack. We might sustain a heavy loss from it.”

“Indeed, that’s dangerous.”

“Well, didn’t we send out scouts as to prevent that from happening?”

“Understood!”

While there was only one ship ahead of them, twenty small-scale ships were sent out for scouting the area near the bay.

They had begun since the battle ended yesterday.

While some sacrifice was made, it was worth it as they obtained valuable intelligence.

At this moment——

The lookout reported once more.

“An enemy ship spotted! It’s a scouting boat!”

“What are your orders, admiral!”

The Adjutant Spark became tensed.

Altina also had a nervous look.

Regis nodded his head.

“It’s fine. Unlike land battles, the surveillance made by the defenders on sea does not have much effect.”

“Eh? Why is that?”

“… If it’s the land, one would normally send an unarmoured soldier with a fast horse for scouting. If they noticed the enemy, they would return to headquarters immediately. As the enemy’s infantry move rather slowly, there’s ample of time for the army to prepare against the attack. On the other hand, the enemy’s scouting boat uses sail just like us, so our speed is about the same.”

“Ah, I see!”

Even if they were discovered, there was no meaning if the scout could not report back swiftly.

“Well… The problem now is whether that ship is faster than us.”

Listening to Regis’ words, laughter could be heard from the side—— He was the captain of the 4th Athena Class Ship Brouillard, which was the new flagship.

He was one of the rare fat people in the army that was filled with muscular soldiers. Though he had excessive fat, there was some muscle too. In addition, he was rather short, so he

gave an impression of being a meatball.

Currently, he was personally manning the helm.

“Buahaha! Don’t worry! Brouillard will not lose to that kind of small boat. I bet my bacon on that!”

The bacon was already in his mouth, betting that kind of bacon was…

Leaving aside the bacon, the captain wasn’t just boasting, and they were not losing in speed.

Rather, they were closing the gap.

Regis was impressed.

“I see, how impressive.”

“Buaha! It’s time to determine the winner——”

“It’s the difference in seakeeping… is it?”

“Oh?! That’s correct! As expected of the admiral! The waves are higher today than usual, so small-scale ship will have their hand full stabilizing the ship.”

“Haha… … In any case, please maintain your current state.”

“Yes Sir!”

“Understood!”

Looks like he’s an approachable person.

Regis was not used to people who were rather forceful, however, he felt more relax conversing with someone who did not care about ranks.

When the sun had emerged from the eastern mountains——

Épée Prière Bay was already right in front of them.

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The bells were ringing.

This bell meant that the enemy had come.

The steam engine which was inside the ship let out a sound that was like a giant beast roaring.

Princess Class, Garnet’s quarterdeck——

“Orya Orya, so noisy!”

Soon after adjutant Lorraine entered the steering house, Molins came out from the conference room that doubles as the Officer’s mess..

“You haven’t put on your clothes yet, Captain?!”

“Eh? Oh, I forgot to put my pants on.”

“You’re no longer a sailor, please do not come to the deck like this. If you’re seen by the admiral…”

“I would be scolded by the gorilla.”

“At that point, you’ll be attacked.”

“Hehe, it’s fine.”

Lorraine ran into the captain’s room and brought his pants, which were on the floor, over.

“Quickly put them on!”

“Right! Help me put them on!”

“Do it yourself!”

Lorraine brought the pants over with a cold expression.

A shrill sound could be heard.

“How cruel. It’s just the bell signalling the enemy’s attack, you don’t have to panic that much.”

“When will captain start panicking?”

“When returning home… …”

Lorraine nursed her temple and lowered her head.

Within the time span of Lorraine praying to the Lord five times, Molins had no choice but to put on the pants himself.

He was done soon after donning his belt.

“Done!”

“The front reported that the enemy have four Athena ships… … and numerous small vessels.”

“Those are probably scouting crafts. Looks like the enemy’s commander is quite cautious. In that case, it would be hard to do a pincer attack even if we placed an ambush outside the bay.”

“We should be thankful for the admiral’s calm decision.”

“Hehe, that gorilla who only follows the textbook wouldn’t use such strategy at all though? He was just finding an excuse to reject it.”

“That… What do you think we should have done then…?”

“The plan was to escort an entire fleet of supply ships with six battleships. Now that we have already lost two, we should

have withdrawn last night.”

“I believe the admiral would not agree…”

“Perhaps I would be labelled as a coward, or be treated as a traitor. However, Lorraine, no matter what results Oswald achieve inland, he’s just using strategies that rely heavily on the new cannons and equipment. The key factor behind it is the supply ships. Which is why it is necessary to have outstanding battleship to control the sea. Even if we can replace the supply vessels, there isn’t anything to replace the battleships.”

“The capital, Queen's Thames’ harbour should have three more Princess Class ships… …”

“If the three Princess Class ships were to move out, what’s left to protect the harbour would be those old-style battleships. This would greatly reduce the harbour’s defense. The parliament wouldn’t agree with it.”

Although Lorraine wasn’t done, she still stopped this topic.

“Captain… In any case, please go to the deck.”

“Oh, what’s coming after this will be on the bed tonight.”

“Can you please be serious?”

“I wonder when you will make me serious?”

“…”

It’s not bad getting glared by a beauty—— Molins thought.

Upon reaching the deck, there was no need for someone to urge the crew to get into position. Since the enemy had already appeared at the cape, one would quickly move to their position no matter how lazy they were.

Soon after that, Ship No. 1 and No. 5 began to move out.

Lorraine shouted.

“Captain! We receive the order to move out!”

“Got it. Well, our crew is outstanding, so don’t panic that much.”

The engine room was located several floors below the deck. Even though it would take up some time to relay the orders, it could not be helped.

Beside the steering wheel was a device that looked like a punctured barrel—— the engine order telegraph.
<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engine_order_telegraph >

The function of the device was to relay messages to the engine room.

Even the relaying of messages was done by machines.

As the engine room was noisy, this device was necessary.

Metal pipes known as speaking tubes were installed in other places for communication.

By utilizing such technologies, it was not that dangerous even if the enemy was attacking with conditions favouring them. That was because they could still give orders out in the bridge that was located under the firm deck.

Oh, I didn't give any commands yet.

Molins was just looking at the scene.

He turned and shouted at the helmsmen.

"Garnet, full speed ahead!"

"Oh!!"

Most of the navigation duties were performed by the crew.

When Lorraine was first posted here, she complained that this system was a violation of the navy rule as Molins neglected his work and was passing his responsibility to others. However, she was already used to this, so she did not panic nor complain. She simply looked at Molins with cold eyes.

“How exciting.”

They just went through a battle yesterday and now they were off to battle again.

Though, it could not be said that there would be no losses.

Reports of water leakage and damages had increased and the one responsible for this was the repairs department. It was arranged that the engine department was responsible for the steam engine, the artillery team was to measure the distance while the logistic department was in charge of the supplies.

Furthermore, there were medical officers performing the work of doctors when not in battle to keep the six hundred men on board healthy.

The most relaxed person was Molins.

On the bridge, there was a rather large and tall table without any chairs.

Beside the table was the captain’s chair, and the sea chart on the table was marked by chalk to indicate something.

The enemy’s route was even more to the north than yesterday,

Lorraine went to report to Molins when the lookout relayed

the message via the speaking tube.

“The enemy had steered to the left! The distance between Ship No. 1 and them is about 3800yd (3475m)”

“Oi oi, they turned?”

Molins furrowed his brows.

Lorraine was also surprised by this and confirmed with the lookout once more.

“There’s no mistake, Captain. The enemy battleships are forming up into a double column. At this moment, the front row is moving perpendicular from the left to the right… Maybe they are executing a manoeuvre to outflank us?”

“It’s plausible if their speed is fast. However, they will still lose out to the steam engine within the bay even if the wind is in their favour.”

“The enemy’s vanguard consists of four Athena class in the front and eight Ouranos in the back. Maybe they want to engage in a cross fire?”

“You’re kidding right?”

It was impossible for the Ouranos class to contribute in a firefight. The main purpose for Ouranos class was for sea rescue or to apprehend smugglers.

Generally, battleships would maintain distance, then turn to bring their broadside to bear and fired their guns at the enemy. Even though there were other strategies like close-combat, the Princess Class which had the advantage in range would not allow the enemy to engage them in such a way.

If their allied ships turned after getting into range, they could keep firing at the enemy while maintaining the distance. The enemy would be attacked without any chance to retaliate.

With the supply ships behind them in this narrow bay, they could not retreat backwards. However, the enemy would be eliminated before it came to that.

Lorraine said softly.

“Could they… have made a mistake…?”

“Normally, that would be the case… ...The Empire’s fleet will continue to advance when we turn and fire on them, then they will turn when they are in range, just like yesterday.”

“Did they replace the commander?”

Perhaps.

Even so, Molins did not feel relieved at all.

“Currently, the commander of the fleet… should be the one

who sunk two of our Princess Class ships with an ambush. Could it be that he does not understand the current situation? Or that he received an oracle?”

The air shook violently.

It was due to cannon blasts.

Lorraine once again relayed the message she got from the lookout.

“The enemy has fired, but it’s short.”

“Don’t be bothered by it… … They are just telling us their range by firing so early.”

“Isn’t this an opportunity?”

“That’s right. Normally, we would change our course and fire at them once they are in our range. It’s not like they can hit us anyway.”

As long they maintained a safe distance and fired at the enemy, they could easily break the enemy’s main fleet.

Any admiral who followed the textbook would not miss out this opportunity.

Molins poked at the sea chart in irritation.

“What exactly is the enemy admiral thinking? This movement seems like the preparations of a course menu of an imperial cuisine, it feels unbearably suspicious, isn't it.”

“That’s right… Ah, the flagship has turned! Right rudder!”

“Of course, the gorilla would do that.”

Even if it was not him, no admiral would let this opportunity slipped away.

Unlike yesterday, they were quite far from the cape.

They were at the centre of the bay, slightly closer to the outside.

No matter what kind of trap awaited, it would not be dangerous if they remain outside the enemy’s range—— That should be the case.

Molins spoke.

“Engine room slow ahead! Right full rudder! Maintain distance from them. No matter what, let us enjoy first.”

“Aye aye Captain!”

The helmsmen operated the telegraph to relay the message.

At the same time, the steering wheel was turned to the right.

They were not following the flagship, but were sailing to the rear of the formation.

Molins actually wanted to turn to the opposite direction…… However, he would not be able to explain himself if he really did that.

The cannons were fired.

But it was just a one-sided battle where they suppressed the empire’s fleet with their range.

Nothing unexpected occurred.

Molins looked through the narrow window to observe the battlefield.

Maybe I’m overthinking it?

Ship No.1 and No. 5 were firing their cannons ferociously.

Slightly further was Ship No. 8.

Molins’ Ship No. 9 was stationed at the rear.

At this point, it could be seen that the flagship, Ship No. 1, had changed it course.

This was the moment when the cannon fire was the fiercest.

Since they were not within the enemy’s range, there was no need to execute a Zig-zag maneuver.

However, the ship was turning at a wide angle. If they were not careful, the ship could even capsize.

What is MacCunn doing?!”

Suddenly, he remembered the enemy’s large-ship sunk around that area.

Lorraine tilted her head.

“This reminds me, that seem to be the area where the Empire’s Poseidon class ship sunk… … However, isn’t their technique that bad if they really hit the sunken ship?”

“Uh… … Perhaps…?”

Even if the firing of cannons were at their fiercest, they were in the middle of the vast sea, so it was unlikely that they would fail to avoid it. Furthermore, the sunken ship’s mast could not be seen, so Ship No. 1 should not have collided with it.

It was likely that Ship No. 1 panicked as they were late in realising the position of the sunken ship. Though, it would be fine once they avoid that dangerous area.

Basically, it was not a big problem.

That was supposed to be the case.

The enemy steered their boat at that distance wisely and fired the cannons even though they could not hit us, all of this was to lure Ship. No. 1 to that position. While they were quite capable, there was not much point in doing this.

This should be what the idiom ‘the strategist dies by his own strategy’ is trying to say.

Molins wasn’t completely relieved, but he still relaxed a little.

At this moment——

From the window, Ship No. 1 rapidly decelerated, as if they were caught by a large net.

“What?!”

“Eh… … Did they collide with the sunken ship?!”

“Even so, it’s too strange for them to decelerate so rapidly! There should be a large hole in the hull if they were hit!”

Even though it was quite serious to have a hole at the bottom of the ship, it should not be able to cause the ship to decelerate that rapidly.

It was hard to see clearly what had happened from the small

window and no message had come from the lookout.

Molins started dashing.

He dashed up the stairs and pushed open the quarterdeck door that led up to the deck.

Ignoring the surprised sailors, Molins leaned his body on the portside railing.

He took the spyglass from his waist and looked at Ship No. 1.

“What exactly happened?!”

Soon, Lorraine came in a hurry.

“Please calm down, Captain! Perhaps they slowed down to put some distance between them and the enemy!”

“That isn’t it. Even a Princess Class battleship cannot do that kind of deceleration. Maybe they caught onto something… Oi! Can you see something in the water?!”

“Eh? There’s nothing… …”

“Move closer to Ship No. 1! Ah, don’t get too close!”

“I’ll go relay the order!”

Lorraine began running.

Molins looked at Ship No. 1 once more.

There were sailors had gathered at the quarterdeck. Some even climbed up the intersection of the rope that was hanging at the mast.

Are they trying to open the sail?

——*Did their steam engine malfunction?*

Ship No. 5 passed by Ship No. 1 which stopped suddenly.

Ship No. 8 also move close behind Ship No. 1 like a loyal dog. Most of the High Britannia ships had stop moving. Though, it was not surprising at all since only a fool would move close to it without knowing the reason why it suddenly decelerated and stopped.

“Ah! This is bad!”

While they were not moving, the enemy ships continued to move.

The wind was favouring them before, but the wind had changed in the enemy’s direction.

Really, this is such a wretched day—— Molins cursed.

Originally, it was his style to delegate the tasks to his

subordinates while he sipped on red tea. But, he was running around the deck as if he was a fresh trainee now!

He quickly ran to the bridge and shouted a command.

“Steam engine full ahead! Right full rudder! Quickly!!”

“Aye aye, Captain!”

The helmsman was confused because of the incident, but he still relayed the message with the telegraph and steered the ship without any hesitation.

“Captain, the lookout said there’s something like a rope in the water!”

Lorraine asked the lookout to explain in details upon hearing his words.

Molins’ face almost came in contact with the speaking tube and spoke.

“Molins here! Report!”

“This is from the Top! Something similar to ropes can be seen near the stern of Ship No. 1!”
<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Top_(sailing_ship) >

“What does it looks like?”

“Perhaps the ropes are from the sunken ship! The propeller seems to be entangled!”

“Damn!”

“There’s another report! Ship No. 5 is heading towards the enemy fleet!”

“Ballista that idiot! Is he thinking about ramming them?!”

The enemy was currently closing the distance while maintaining their firing formation.

Even though they would be bombarded before they drew near, the enemy still wished to close the gap and focus fire at a close distance.

Even so, considering their firepower, before one ally ship was brought down, they could sink four to five enemy battleships.

Going by that logic, Ship No. 1 which could not move was the best target since it could not point its broadside at the enemy.

Ship No. 9 turned and aimed its cannons at the enemy fleet.

However, Ship No. 5 was in the middle.

To prevent friendly fire, Molins did not give the order to fire.

Ship No. 8 made the same judgement too. Even though they moved to the front of Ship No. 1 to protect it, they did not fire after steering.

In such situation, Molins was thinking.

——*This is the same as yesterday when Ship No. 4 and No. 6 were ambushed.*

==========

In front of the quarterdeck of the flagship of the Empire’s Western Liberation Fleet, Brouillard, Regis held the portside railing and looked at the enemy fleet.

In order to pass down the next command, the adjutant walked towards the signalman.

Altina was standing beside Regis.

“The front most ship isn’t moving. Did you do something to it, Regis?”

“Yes, I tied some floating ropes around the sunken Poseidon Class.”

“What’s that for? That ship is being hindered by the ropes?”

“While there isn’t any problem for sailboats, the steam ship uses a propeller. The propeller works by expelling the water

to the back, thus moving the ship. Think about it—— For the Princess Class ships that’s so huge to move faster than the cavalry, exactly how much water is required to be expelled? Furthermore, the volume being expelled is equivalent to the intake.”

“It looks like they have to expel quite a large volume of water…”

The propeller does not simply suck in water, but also trash. And of course, the floating ropes are no exception.”

“Can the ropes really stop them?”

“That depends on how you use them. If it’s just one rope, wouldn’t it be cut into pieces? But the propeller is delicate. Though if it got entangled with the propeller shaft, it would increase the burden of expelling the water, or it might even break in the worst case… … Just like cleaving at a tree with a sword.”

Altina pouted

“What a subtle comparison. Well, I understand now.”

“Hahaha… … Though to set this trap, we had to dive into the sea and work at night. It’s great that the efforts were not wasted since the plan worked.”

“You were able to find out the position of the sunken ship at

night?”

“I already marked several positions when it sunk, since it’s impossible to just rely on the moonlight to find the ship in the water. After that, we just needed to dive down to the sunken ship with ropes. The rest of the job could then be done even with our eyes closed.”

Though according to the sailors, entering the damaged sunken ship took them quite a bit of effort.

“Did you dive into the sea too, Regis?”

“Do you think that I can dive into the sea and finish the work within five minutes without any sound like the fishes?”

“Ahaha… That’s impossible. After all, there are waves too.”

“Since when did you begin thinking that I could swim if it’s not the sea?”

“Arara.”

“Not that I’m bragging… But I almost drowned in a washbasin.”

“Eh? Is that when you’re still a child?”

“A, ahh… … There’s that… … Though it still occurs even now.”

Regis smiled weakly.

Altina pointed at the enemy ship that was not moving.

“What about that? Are we going to borrow the ship from the enemy…? That reminds me, but isn’t our goal this time is to obtain the enemy ships?”

“I do wish to have it… If we can obtain that kind of high performance ship, we can still produce ships similar to it even if the ship itself isn’t considered a fighting force. Though the problem is that whether this trap would damage the propeller… … It’s impossible for the Empire’s current technology to repair it if it’s broken.”

“What? Isn’t it meaningless then?!”

“That’s right, even if we capture it, if the key component is broken… … Then that isn’t something that I like.”

“Something that you like?”

The voice of the returning adjutant covered Altina’s voice.

“Admiral! The enemy ship is approaching!”

“Ah, I see it.”

Overtaking the Princess Class Ship No. 1, the Princess Class

Ship No. 5 had sailed towards them.

Altina pointed at it.

“Open fire! Open fire!”

“Don’t be too hasty, I’m thinking here… …”

“Ah, sorry. We can’t execute the command if it isn’t from the admiral.”

“Haha… … It’s fine. Rather, there isn’t the need to worry.”

Regis showed a smile to Altina as to stop Altina from worrying.

The adjutant widened his eyes.

“Although this may be rude, I think that admiral is an incredible person.”

“Someone that would be fired by the military…?”

“T,that isn’t it! It’s just that you can still remain calm and smile even in this kind of situation. I had been the adjutant for three different admirals. No matter how they were normally, they became serious once they entered the battlefield.”

Speaking of which, admiral Bertram was also a serious

person.

“In my case, it’s not like I’m trying to show anything… … It’s just that this situation isn’t something that I have to worry about… … The orders have been relayed, right?”

“Yes, that’s the ship!”

One of the Ouranos Class ship overtook the four Athena Class ships and sailed forward.

The ship charged ahead.

Altina leaned her body out.

“What is it doing?!”

“Your Highness… It’s dangerous, so please come down… … Otherwise, you might be hurt by the shrapnel.

“Eh?”

Only the Ouranos ship could compete with the Princes Class in speed. Both ships were on a collision course with each other and the distance between them disappeared in no time.

“Regis, are you planning to let that ship ram them directly?!”

“That’s right… … Well, since the Ouranos ship is that small, no matter the angle, it won’t deal much damage even if it

collides.”

The size of the Ouranos Class was not even half of the Princes Class. It was like comparing children to adults.

“Since it is ineffective… … There’re still people on board?!”

“They already made preparation to jump into the sea just before the collision… “

Even so, the enemy might be able to avoid it if there were no helmsmen on board at the critical moment. However, Regis could only leave it to the sailors’ judgement.

“Regis, can’t we fire at them?!”

“With just four Athena ships, even if we cross the ‘T’ on the Princess Class, there’s still a chance that the enemy ship won’t sink. Furthermore, we can’t lose anymore battleships. Also, I won’t allow it if I can’t see what I like.”
<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crossing_the_T >

“See?”

“The scene that I read in a story before… It illustrated the daily lives of the people there…”

Regis smiled at the sea.

==========

Lorraine ran to Molins to report.

“An Ouranos ship is approaching Ship No. 5!”

“What?! I still have no idea what’s going on… … What exactly is the Empire’s admiral thinking?”

Molins had been thinking until his head hurt.

The speed of the ships from both sides were very fast.

It was impossible to be unscathed if they collided.

Even so, their ship should be fine even if they collide since the enemy ship was not even half of their size. The Princess Class ships were not that fragile.

This was something the enemy should know.

Perhaps Ship No. 5 could even approach the enemy fleet without receiving any bombardment.

If this went on, they could brush aside the Ouranos ship and open fire at the enemy at a close distance.

Maybe they could even destroy the enemy’s main fleet with just Ship No. 5.

“Oura oura… Is Ballista going for a Victoria Cross?”

<TL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Cross >

“Are you interested too, Captain?”

“After all, it comes with a tidy bonus several times my pay. But for me, I won’t even get any allowance.”

“It doesn’t seem that way when you’re this calm… …”

“That’s because I can’t do anything but watch.”

As the two ships closed the gap, Ship No. 5 considered for sometime before deciding to maintain their course. Furthermore, they did not think of firing at them even if they knew they would collide.

The two ships were about to collide in between the two nations’ fleets.

In Molins’ eyes, the small Ouranos ship would be wrecked by the large Princess Class. Most likely, this was what everyone thought.

The sailors on board on the Ouranos began to jump overboard like rats abandoning a sinking ship.

Suddenly, Molins felt a chill.

——*Could this be a trap?*

The Ouranos made a small crack on the bow of the Princess Class number 5.

The collision was like caressing its face.

As expected, the Ouranos' bow shattered and the mast had fallen. The whole ship broke into pieces.

In that case, Ship No. 5 would break through and move ahead.

After this——

A blinding light prevented their eyes from opening.

An explosion.

Molins could feel the explosion even though he was in the bridge.

"…?!"

The glass panels shattered.

The crew wailed.

His blood was boiling and his heart was beating furiously as if he was awakened in the middle of a night.

——*What happened?!*

It exploded.

Ship No. 5’s bow… …

Exploded along with the Ouranos ship it rammed.

There was whirring black smoke and the wreckage of the Ouranos ship could not be seen on the sea.

Not only that, Ship No. 5’s bow and some areas at the side was gone.

Small scale explosion such as the bore of a cannon discharging happens from time to time.

Before the ship even caught fire, Ship No. 5 had already begun sinking.

Even a ship that had a large hole torn in it would not sink that fast.

It was like glass dropped into the sea.

The sailors did not even have the time to abandon ship.

In an instant, the large warship vanished.

“…?!”

Molins was speechless.

That was the same for the other crew and his aide.

The menacing Ship No. 5 about to swallow the opposing ship disappeared without a trace, just like a piece removed from the chessboard.

Ha! Lorraine ran to the speaking tube.

“All stations, status report! Is our ship alright?!”

Her voice snapped them from their daze.

Molins ran to the helmsmen.

“How’s the engine room?!”

“Confirming now… … Aye! There isn’t any problem!”

“I see.”

Lorraine grabbed the speaking tube and spoke.

“Captain! The empire’s flagship has sent out flag signals!”

“Hm, they finally came.”

From the small window, he could see the message the enemy was sending.

——Halt the ship. We will not attack if you surrender.

Molins nodded.

“Fufu… … Do you take me as an idiot!”

“Captain, are we going to fight?!”

“Are you serious, Lorraine? Are you going too? We’re fleeing right now!”

“Ehh?!”

“How can we surrender when we still have the advantage in speed! Oi, Full speed, right full rudder! Sail out of the bay!”

The helmsmen replied: “Aye aye Captain!”

How can you do that! Lorraine ran over.

“Aren’t the supply ships still at the harbour?! Also, Ship No. 1 can’t move!”

“What about it?! We are only left with Ship No. 9 and that old man in No. 8!”

“There’s still two princess ships, while the enemy only has four Athena ships… …”

“Who knows how many more of those they have! Did you not see what happened to Ship No. 5?!”

“That… … what will happen to the supply lines if we lose the supply ships at the harbour…?”

Molins thrust his finger-tip at her breasts.

“Listen carefully, Lorraine! Use your smart brain and remember this—— Compared to those things, I’m more concern about the lives of me and my crew!”

“Even if we lose the war...?”

“We will think about it after we survive—— Alright, sail out of the bay!”

The blasting of cannons rang.

Looking back, it was Ship No. 8 that had fired.

From the looks of it, it did not attempt to escape or surrender, but decided to continue fighting.

You’re just recommended by the queen, do you need to be this loyal?

Lorraine kept staring at him.

While Molins relaxed his shoulders.

“I’m sorry… I can’t be like a knight like Olsen who can sacrifice himself for the nation.”

“Even if people would call you a coward if you run away?”

“Let them be. I’m fine with whatever they want to call me…”

Molins’ mouth turned crooked with a smile.

He averted his gaze away from Lorraine who looked at him with cold eyes.

He swallowed back the latter parts of his words.

——*I just don’t want you to die.*

Saying those words out would only make her blame herself.

Ship No. 9 which raised its speed almost reached the bay entrance.

“Hm? Oi, what’s that?”

Molins widened his eyes.

Cold sweat was dripping down his back.

Those things were hidden behind either side of the cape.

He was had.

Molins laughed weakly.

“Haha… … Is everything up til now within your control? Did you expected this? Oi, what kind of person are you, you devil of the empire… …Damn it!”

He grabbed his captain’s hat and threw it onto the floor.

The helmsmen paled when they heard the gloomy report

from the crow’s nest.

Lorraine went weak in the knees and knelt.

Her face was pale while her body kept trembling.

“How… Even to this extent… … Why?”

The bridge door was opened as a panting soldier entered. The soldier was the one responsible for reading the flag signals.

It seemed that he did not use the speaking tube and came directly instead.

“Haa… Haa… … Captain, it’s the enemy.”

“Ah, I saw it, what a shame.”

“Two Athena ships and over twenty different ships of various models… …”

“When did the empire gather so many battleships? Did they call in the ships from nearby?”

“Most of them are small crafts… …”

If the previous incident did not happen, he likely would have forged on ahead with a laugh.

With the overwhelming firepower of the Princess Class, this kind of encirclement was nothing to be afraid of.

That should normally be the case.

“Isn’t this bad? Even though they are small ships, but they will explode if we collide. Well, I’m not too sure what will happen though. Perhaps we won’t be as bad as Ship No. 5… Do you want to give it a try?”

“Ah… No… …”

“I’m joking. After seeing that and still asking the crew to fight to the death, I think the crew would mutiny before the enemy could defeat us.”

“T-That is… …”

“I wonder what would be the result.”

Ship No. 8’s cannon had stopped firing.

It was not that it got hit. Instead, the smoke coming out from the smokestack had lessened, indicating that the engine was switched off.

Molins walked to the steering seat.

He placed his hand on the helmsman’s shoulder and pushed him aside.

“Ah, captain… …”

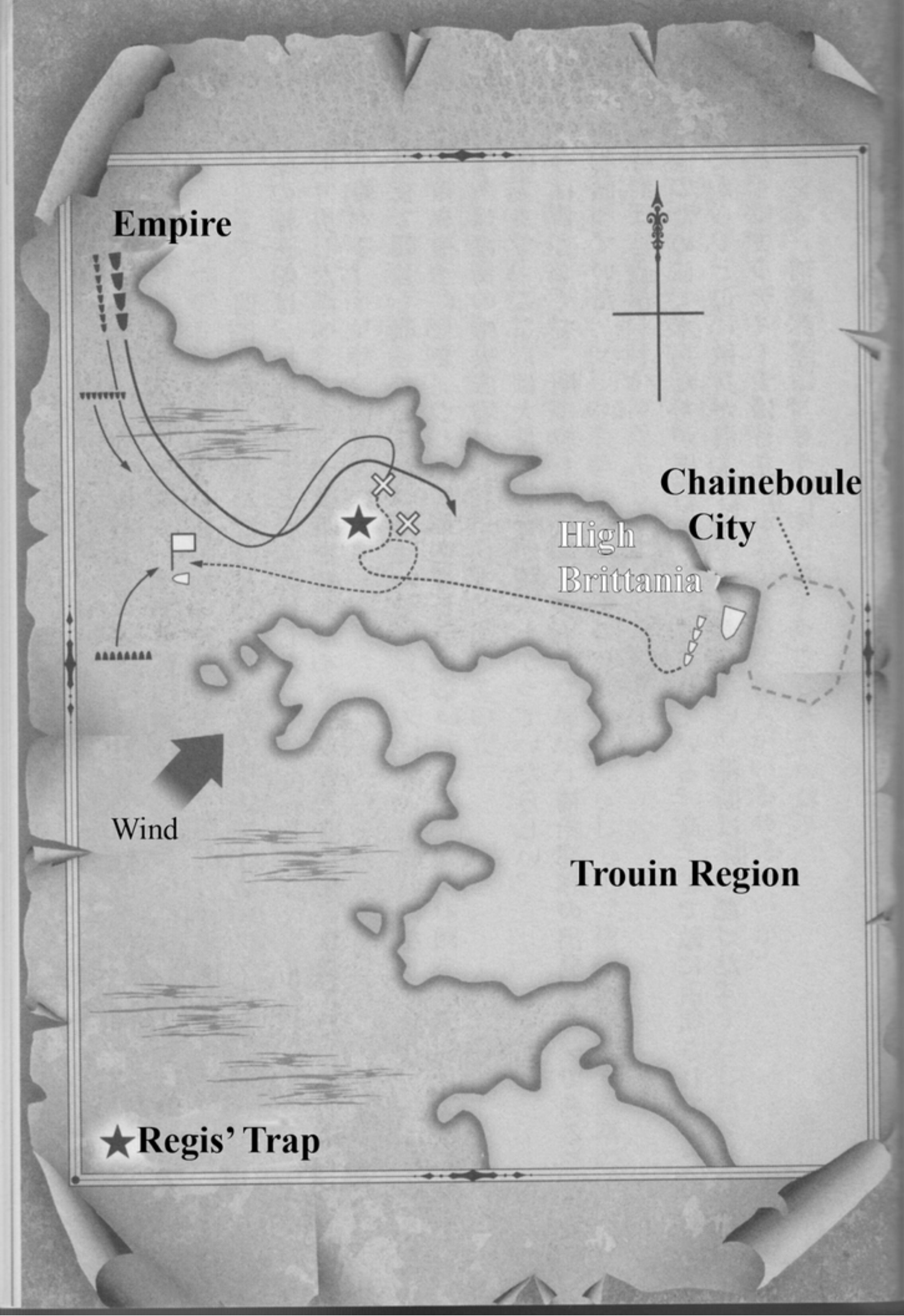
He held onto the lever for the telegraph.

Pushing the lever up and giving the commands to the engine room. That was it—— But he wouldn’t forget about this action for the rest of his life

Finished With Engines.

Following that, he smiled bitterly towards the flag signalman who was on the bow.

“The white flag… Can you let me raise it personally?”


Empire
Chaineboule City
High Brittania
Wind
Trouin Region
★Regis' Trap

“...It’s great that we made it in time...”

The supply ships at the harbour surrendered without any resistance.

Athena Class Ship No. 4, Brouillard, sailed into Chaineboule’s harbour which they recaptured. Altina and Regis alighted the ship and landed.

As Regis did not get any sleep nor ate anything, his seasickness was pretty bad. He did not even have the strength to stand as he used an empty box as a chair.

This was the central plaza of the harbour city.

It seemed that this area was filled supplies up til morning.

Currently, there was nothing here and the eastern gate was open. It seemed to indicate the fact that the supply division had moved out.

Afternoon——

The navy was patrolling the surrounding area. This was because the city was occupied by the enemy till recently, and they might be lying in ambush somewhere.

Furthermore, Altina was that prominent.

“Regis, the supply unit seems to have set off?”

“… Well, they saw that powerful explosion.”

“There isn’t anyone who can still move leisurely after seeing an explosion like that.”

“…Yes… Looks like the Mercenary King Gilbert’s unit is going to link up with the supply unit, so don’t let your guard down.”

“Eh?! Weren’t they heading towards the capital?!”

“It seems that he brought along some of his subordinates… After all, the supplies are the kingdom’s lifeline, so they will send their best general to protect it. As expected of Commander Oswald Coulthard.”

This piece of information was obtained when Regis interrogated one of the captured soldiers.

That said, the one interrogating was someone else. Right now, Regis was worried about the captive’s body.

Altina clenched her fist.

“Ah… So it’s the mercenary who injured Latreille with a trident. So he came here.”

“… Erm… I will say this upfront, don’t even think of charging ahead…”

“I-I know that! Though I don’t intend to run!”

Her sword was damaged and was sent for repair, so she was using a normal longsword right now. In addition, it could be seen from the battle on the Founding day that Latreille was more skilled than her with a sword.

If one could injure Latreille, that would mean Altina did not have much chance.

As a strategist, after taking her personality into account, it was important to come up with a strategy that prevented her from engaging Gilbert.

In the first place, the headquarters being attacked meant that the strategy failed.

Hoping for Altina to beat the Mercenary King in a one on one duel was a fool’s errand. However, she wasn’t the type who would reject a challenge, which would lower morale anyway.

“Hmm… Mercenary King, Gilbert… I must take him into consideration… My head hurts…”

“If that situation really happens, I will get rid of him personally!”

“Please don’t!”

That reminds me—— Altina asked.

“Hey, why did that ship explode?”

“That ship? Oh, you mean the Ouranos that rammed the enemy. It exploded because it was filled with gunpowder. The storage for food and water, the gundeck and the passageways were filled with the gunpowder unloaded from the Poseidon. There was a mechanism that would ignite it on impact. That being said, it was just a torch placed on top of the bags of gunpowder.”

“Was it the same for the other ships?”

“No. If the enemy didn’t lose their will to fight after witnessing that scene, I would have used another strategy.”

“You had another strategy?!”

“… If they were that willing to fight, I had a way of catching them before they could escape out of the bay. The cannons that were unloaded from the Poseidon ship were stationed on the cape. Furthermore, there’s also the method of lighting ropes that were dipped in oil… … Though I’m glad that I don’t have to use that since oil is expensive.”

“Were all of these done last night?”

“No… The work on the Poseidon was done yesterday morning. As for the oil, I got an envoy to prepare it when the

Western expedition was decided, just in case the fleet was already lost.”

“Hah.”

She seemed to be stunned from that and took a deep breath.

Regis stated an example that was recorded in books and explained how it was effective, and how it was presented brilliantly in the story. He also told her examples of failure in the stories, and what the circumstances was— He lectured on eagerly.

“Well. I had to use my imagination for a lot of the parts in stories about the sea, but this part was even more interesting.”

“Regis is Regis after all.”

Altina shrugged and looked towards the mountain range in the east.

“Hey, the supply unit have set up, what should we do next?”

“... Wait for a moment, then link up with the Fourth Army.”

“Eh, with Jerome and the others?”

“... They are hiding along the hills... So they could keep an eye on the harbour. I considered attacking overland directly if

the sea battle didn’t go well. If they could seize the harbour, they would then raise our flag.”

Just like the time they conquered Fort Volks.

They should be able to rejoin the unit today.

“But how would they fight? Even if Fort Le Troyeti had adequate forces, that would only be 14,000 men right? Can they defeat the enemy supply unit equipped with the new rifles and cannons?”

“That’s true.”

“If the large amount of supplies is sent to the front lines, the capital’s defence would be even more trying…”

“… Hmm, how about this? We just try to stop them from completing the delivery.”

“Hah~~”

Altina sighed deeply.

It was a rare sight for the energetic Altina.

“Are you tired?”

“My heart is full of worries and unease, I can’t sit still! I want to chase after the enemy supply unit right now!”

“... It would be better to link up with Sir Jerome’s forces first.”

“That’s how anxious I am, Regis! And you are still so calm! Keep saying that it’s fine it’s fine!”

She flailed her hands around.

Like a child throwing a tantrum.

“Hahaha…” Regis laughed.

Thanks to that, “Really~~~” Altina got even more agitated.

“... I didn’t insist that it will be fine all the time. There are plenty of things we don’t know, and there are many times when I couldn’t help. But it will definitely be fine this time. The supply unit set off at dawn, so we will catch up to them at a nice plain— Hmm?”

At this moment, Adjutant Spark walked over.

He had a really cheerful smile.

“Please come this way, Admiral!”

“... Erm... I’m no longer the Acting Fleet Admiral.”

“Ah, my apologies, Sir strategist!”

Spark saluted respectfully.

Regis returned the salute that didn’t look too shabby.

He had yet to recover from his seasickness, and was still sitting on a crate.

“What’s the matter?”

“Admiral Bertram woke up just now!”

“Oh! That’s—”

“Wah, awesome!!”

Altina clapped her hands.

Regis nodded happily too.

“… How is he?”

“He is wide awake, and heard my report just now. He told me to convey his thanks if Sir strategist is still in the harbour.”

“I see. I need to thank him for granting me command of the fleet. Hmm? Ah, there isn’t enough time.”

“Ah!!”

Altina walked briskly to the east.

The figures of the cavalry riding in the dust could be seen between the gaps of the building.

It had only been a few days, but he missed the sight of them. The Black Knight Corps of the Fourth Imperial Army.

The unit led by the hero Jerome.

Spark nodded with a regretful expression.

“… Seems like you all are in a hurry… I will pass your message to Admiral Bertram right now.”

“Ah, thank you. Please tell him ‘Thank you for lending the fleet to me, please take care of your health.’”

“Understood!”

Spark saluted again.

Regis stood up this time and saluted formally.

He then reached the right hand that was before his chest out.

“It was thanks to your effort that an amateur like me could command the fleet so well.”

And shook Spark’s hand happily.

“No such thing! Sir strategist is the best Admiral I have ever served! I will work hard and plan a miraculous strategy like you one day!”

“Ha… Hahah…”

Altina seemed to be amused.

“Regis is a wizard!”

“Erm… Alti…?!”

“I see!” Spark also laughed.

“Indeed, that was magic!”

“No… That… That was just something similar to the books…”

“Sir strategist really loves to read. If possible, can you tell me which books I should study?”

Regis seemed troubled for a moment.

He could talk about the contents of books all day, but it was hard for him to express his thoughts, and it was also embarrassing.

There wasn’t time too.

Both Spark and Altina were waiting for Regis to speak.

Regis scratched his forehead.

“Well… Actually, just read any books you find interesting will do. Even books that seem boring aren’t actually that dull. It’s just that the reader couldn’t find the interesting parts.”

==========

Imperial year 851, 2nd June. The fleet commanded by Acting Fleet Admiral Regis d’Auric successfully seize back Chaineboule Harbour.

But more than half of the supplies had been loaded onto wagons and sent out. If these resources reached Oswald in the frontlines, the Imperial’s defence would become incredibly difficult.

Regis and Altina joined up with Jerome and the Fourth Imperial Army.

Although the soldiers were tired from the long expedition, they had recovered after a few days of rest.

According to reports, soldiers from the Beilschmidt Border Regiment, Fort Le Troyeti and volunteers numbered 16,000 in total.

At the center of the huge Army——

There was a white carriage, and Clarisse sat inside. If there were many people around, she would be as silent as a doll.

However, the moment she met the eyes of Regis who returned, her smile was gentler than the night. Her light coloured lips moved a little, as if she was saying ‘welcome back’.

In front of Regis and Altina who were walking towards Clarisse —

A knight in black riding a dark horse with a stern expression appeared.

“Hey, Regis!”

“… Ah, Sir Jerome.”

Jerome was showing a scary face.

Altina was beside Regis.

“Jerome, where is my horse!? We are setting off right now!”

“Hmmp, seems that just taking the harbour… isn’t enough.”

“… That’s right, they unloaded plenty of supplies yesterday.”

Regis pulled his neck back a little.

With the supply fleet defeated, further supplies would be cut off. However, the supplies that had been unloaded were heading towards the front lines, they had to do something about them.

Jerome’s expression was more sinister than ever.

“Hey Regis, before we came to the sea, you said it was impossible to defeat the 10,000 strong supply unit right?”

“I did say that…”

“But this supply unit already loaded the gunpowder, and is heading towards the capital. What do you plan to do?”

“… Well, we have to think of a way to deal with it. It’s fine, I have a plan.”

“Ku! You have a plan!? Then explain it! Why did we attack

from the sea!?”

Jerome placed his hand on the sword on his waist.

It seemed that Regis wasn’t allowed to muddle his way through.

His back broke out in cold sweat.

“... Even if we defeat the land based supply unit, they will still send the resources via sea route, so it would be meaningless. It would be best if we can take back the harbour they use to unload the goods. Cavalries can’t match the speed of ships after all.”

“So that is the reason you attacked the supply fleet? Did you try to pull a fast one on me?”

“That’s a troubling way to put it… Well, to be frank, that’s true… After all, if I didn’t say ‘even if defeat the land supply unit, if we don't cut off the sea route, the supplies will arrive eventually’, wouldn’t such a half hearted proposal be hard for others to accept?”

Further to that, the Belgaria Imperial navy challenged the High Britannian supply fleet before, but lost the battle.

If Regis told the truth, Marshall Latreille would probably gave the order ‘if we can stop the supply via land, then don’t do anything more’.

Altina frowned.

“Indeed, before we won the sea battle, I was thinking that we should avoid the disadvantageous sea battle if we can win on land.”

But even so, she still supported Regis’ proposal firmly.

Jerome nodded.

“Well, that’s fine… But I won’t be fooled by you again!”

“… I-I didn’t lie though.”

“Hah!”

Jerome snorted on his horse and turned.

The horse snorted too.

Even Altina was mumbling “This shouldn’t be… a lie right…?”

Regis was on the verge of tears.

“How strange, I tried to play the best move… But, this is the result?”

Jerome asked again.

“And so? The enemy is an army of 5000 armed with the newest rifle. They are not just delivering provisions, they even have cannons. There isn’t any dangerous terrain from here to the capital.”

“… On top of that, the Mercenary King Gilbert is there.”

“Ku!”

When he heard the name of the strongest mercenary in the continent, Jerome laughed. *How unfathomable.*

“… But we have a near complete understanding of the new rifles. The Mercenary King doesn’t have many underlings too, so it should be fine…”

“What?”

“Are you worried about something, Regis?”
Jerome and Altina waited for Regis’ reply.

Regis looked to the east.

“… It will take more time than expected… I am worried about the fight in the capital.”

He felt the words and actions of Latreille back then was a bit off.

Volume 6 End

Appendices

Cuirassé

Using rafts with sails tied to it to fish existed long before human invented writing, so its invention wasn’t recorded.

When the Belgarian Empire was founded in the west of the continent, sail ships capable of crossing oceans could already be built.

The ships back then were simple in design, planks laid out in the shape of a boat were secured with horizontal boards, the gaps were filled in with limestone, hemp and resin. The ship might break apart if the waves were too big.

500 years ago, a new technology propagated from the east, which was the use of a thick pillar known as a keel in the center of the ship, which improved the durability of the ship exponentially. Earlier ships were just 50m, and it could now exceed 100m.

Knowledge that formed the fundamentals of cannons arrived at the same time.

The main way of fighting naval wars were to approach an enemy ship, board it and fight on it with melee weapons. In that era, the Belgarian Empire had never lost. Almost the entire fleet had rams in order to crush into enemy vessels.

With the improvement in the performance and mass production of cannons, they could be installed onto the decks and sink enemy vessels before they even get close, so melee tactics shifted towards cannon shoot outs.

Back then, only the upper decks had cannons, and the fleet with vessels of different speed and sizes would fire upon each other as they drew closer, turning it into a chaotic battle.

As High Britannia was an island nation, it’s import of tea through commerce resulted in their experience with vessels far exceeding the other countries, and wrote doctrines on naval warfare.

The fleet with uniform firepower and speed would form up in a line, and fire their cannons in unison. As this strategy was very effective, fleets that only place their cannons on the

deck became a thing of the past. That was 200 years ago. Now, the Belgarian Empire and the surrounding nations also mimic High Britannia and mass produced such warships, and it became the era of battleships.

If High Britannia built a 74 gun battleship, the Belgarian Empire would craft a 80 gun battleship, leading to a race in inflating the size and number of guns for battleships. There was even an incident where a battleship sunk when all its guns fired because of the reckless demand of the military to increase the number of guns.

Soins Médicaux

The medical technology of the Belgaria Empire in Imperial year 851 was much more advanced than the neighbouring states.

The surrounding nations still thought that illness was the malevolence of the devil and used prayers as treatment. If the patient had a fever, his entire body would be dipped into water, if there were wounds, poisonous grass would be stuff in there, and treatment was mostly dependent on religious or traditional remedies.

As cutting off the body part that hurts was the mainstream method of treatment, the ones who were familiar with scissors and performed such surgeries were barbers. There was no concept of sterilization, so the blades weren’t heated or disinfected with alcohol before it was used.

In the Empire, doctors were an officially recognized job. Even though surgical and medicinal treatment were still mixed together, they were more widespread than treatment with prayers.

However, it was still a vast gap from modern medical science.

As marijuana was used for anesthesia, some patients became addicted. Blood transfusion used goat’s blood, but they didn’t know about the existence of blood type and how to stop blood from coagulating, death because of blood transfusion were common.

The existence of microorganism was discovered because of microscopes, but they didn’t consider the possibility that germs were the cause of diseases.

In this era, even though the virus of small box that threatened mankind throughout history had not been

discovered yet, the disease was being eradicated as vaccines had been developed.

As for the treatment of injuries from swords and arrows, it had not changed since ancient times. White cloth would be used to cover the wounds and stop the blood. It would then be cleaned properly. The rotting parts would be cut off, and the blood stopped. They were basically dependent on the body recovering natural, which was a battle of the patient’s endurance.

Doctors in armies had to handle large numbers of wounded at the same time, and they were trained to triage the patients.

Priority would be given to the heavily injured and urgent cases. Or rather, they would judge whether such patients were beyond saving.

The textbook would indicate if a wound to a certain body part or the appearance of a certain colour of liquid would mean the patient was beyond saving.

Most heavy injuries result in death, and they would suffer from sequelae even if they survived. Only a very small handful could make a full recovery.

When war broke out, there would be a large number of death and injuries. In this world, there were no healing magic or items to revive the dead.

アルティナ第6巻、
読んでくださって
ありがとうございます。

今回はたくさん
海が出てくるお話
なので、せっかくなので
水着を描きました。

むらさきさん、
担当の和田さん、
今回も校条しませて
いただきました。
ありがとうございます。

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